

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



February 2016

Vol. 121, No. 2

₹ 10.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Reason versus Religion—X

Similarly, the sum-total of this universe is immovable, we know, but everything pertaining to this universe consists of motion, everything is in a constant state of flux, everything changing and moving. At the same time, we see that the universe as a whole is immovable, because motion is a relative term. I move with regard to the chair, which does not move. There must be at least two to make motion. If this whole universe is taken as a unit there is no motion; with regard to what should it move? Thus the Absolute is unchangeable and immovable, and all the movements and changes are only in the phenomenal world, the limited. That whole is Impersonal, and within this Impersonal are all these various persons beginning with the lowest atom, up to God, the Personal God, the Creator, the Ruler of the Universe, to whom we pray, before whom we kneel, and so on. Such a Personal God can be established with a great deal of reason. Such a Personal God is explicable as the highest manifestation of the Impersonal. You and I are very low manifestations, and the Personal God is the highest of which we can conceive. Nor can you or I become that Personal God. When the Vedanta says you and I are God, it does not mean the Personal God. To take an example. Out of a mass of clay a huge elephant of clay is manufactured, and out of the same clay, a little clay mouse is made. Would the



clay mouse ever be able to become the clay elephant? But put them both in water and they are both clay; as clay they are both one, but as mouse and elephant there will be an eternal difference between them. The Infinite, the Impersonal, is like the clay in the example. We and the Ruler of the Universe are one, but as manifested beings, men, we are His eternal slaves, His worshippers. Thus we see that the Personal God remains. Everything else in this relative world remains, and religions is made to stand on a better foundation. Prayers will remain, only they will get a better meaning. And indeed we shall be fools if we go the Father of all mercy, Father of all love, for trivial earthly things. Unto Him, therefore, we shall go for light, for strength and for love. strength and for love. minds, perhaps, will have to go. And indeed we shall be fools if we go the Father of all mercy, Father of all love, for trivial earthly things. Unto Him, therefore, we shall go for light, for strength and for love.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.388-90.



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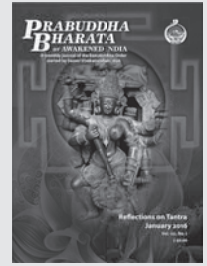
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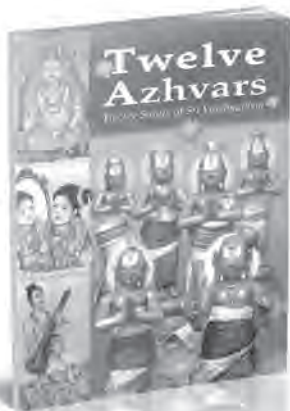
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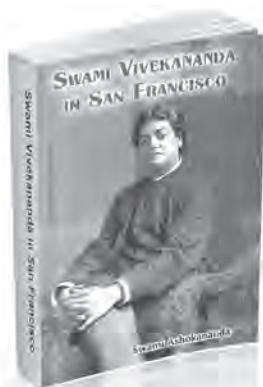


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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

February 2016
Vol. 121, No. 2

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषद्

ते होचुर्भगवन् यद्येवमस्यात्मनो महिमानं सूचयसीत्यन्यो वा परःकोऽयमात्माख्यो योऽयं सितासितैः
कर्मफलैरभिभूयमानः सदसद्योनिमापद्यता इत्यवाञ्च्योर्द्ध्वा वा गतिर्द्वन्द्वैरभिभूयमानः परिभ्रमति ।

॥ ३.१ ॥

*Te hochur-bhagavan yady-evam-asya-atmano mahimanam suchayasity-anyo va parah
ko'yamatmakhyo yo'yam sitasitaih karma-phalair-abhibhuyamanah sad-asad-yonim-apadyata
ity-avanchyorddhva va gativ-dvandvair-abhibhuyamanah paribhramati.* (3.1)

They, the Vaikhilyas, said to Prajapati Kratu: 'Sir, if you thus describe the greatness of the Atman, then there is another different one also called the Atman, who, overcome by the good or bad fruits of actions, enters a good or bad womb and has a downward or upward course and wanders around, overcome by the pairs of opposites like happiness and misery. (3.1)

अस्ति खल्वन्योऽपरो भूतात्माख्यो योऽयं सितासितैः कर्मफलैरभिभूयमानः सदसद्योनिमापद्यता इत्य-
वाञ्च्योर्द्ध्वा वा गतिर्द्वन्द्वैरभिभूयमानः परिभ्रमतीत्यस्योपव्याख्यानम् ।

॥ ३.२ ॥

*Asti khalvanyo'paro bhutatmakhyo yo'yam sitasitaih karma-phalair-abhibhuyamanah sad-asad-
yonim-apadyata ity-avanchyorddhva va gativ-dvandvair-abhibhuyamanah paribhramati-ity-
asyopavyakhanam.* (3.2)

Prajapati Kratu said: 'Indeed, there is another different one called the elemental soul, who, overcome by the good or bad fruits of actions, enters a good or bad womb and has a downward or upward course and wanders around, overcome by the pairs of opposites like happiness and misery. This is its explanation.' (3.2)

THIS MONTH

HOW CAN ONE ACHIEVE the most with whatever resources one has seems to be the eternal and inevitable question of everyone's life. However, in the pursuit of an answer to this question, we tend to drift farther and farther away from our selves. **Preserving Energy** tries to bring back the focus on to us and explores how we can conserve our resources and channel them to achieve our goals.

Mandukya Upanishad has been accorded great importance by scholars and spiritual practitioners, both traditional and modern. It holds the crucial key to unravel the mystery that is consciousness. This month we start a new series of the transcription of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. In the first instalment of this series, the various states of consciousness are explained.

Spiritual life is all about understanding and channelling our psyche. In the first instalment of **The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life**, Swami Nityasthananda, acharya at the Probationers' Training Centre, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, tells us how our inner emptiness leads us to identify with external objects and persons.

Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on knowledge has been analysed by Kapil Kumar Bhattacharya, a research scholar of Indian communication perspectives at the Centre for Journalism and Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati University,

in **Theory and Knowledge in the Indian Tradition in the Light of Swami Vivekananda**.

Swami Premananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda, inspired countless to realise God in this very life. Swami Omkareshwarananda recounts some of **Swami Premananda's Teachings** in its first instalment. This has been translated from the Bengali book *Premananda*.

Films have frequently adopted Indian motifs. The series of novels and their film adaptations titled *Divergent* have taken ideas from the Indian caste system. Pritha Lal, a systems thinker, organisational specialist, author, blogger, and poet from Utah, USA discusses these similarities in **Of Films, Fantasy, and Faith**.

In the nineteenth instalment of **Svarajya Siddhibi of Gangadharendra Sarasvati—Attaining Self-dominion**, the Buddhist standpoint is quashed. This text has been translated and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda, editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

This month we start a new column, *Traditional Tales*. Here we will bring stories from the Indian tradition. This month we bring the story of **The King and the Scholar**. This story has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

What is the relation between God and religion? What is death and immortality? These and other questions have been explored by Ronald Dworkin, former Frank Henry Sommer professor of law and philosophy at the New York University, in **Religion Without God**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Preserving Energy

THIS IS NOT A DISCUSSION ON conserving energy resources given by Nature like oil and gas. This is a discussion on conserving the energy we human beings possess at the individual level so that we can make the optimum use of the resources that are given to us: the body and the mind. It is too common to miss the obvious and concentrate on things that sound glorious, all the while ignoring that which is nearer to us and that which can be accomplished easily. It is a fad today to speak of conserving energy, of tapping non-conventional energy sources, and of decreasing our use of non-renewable energy sources. In the momentum and intensity of such discussions, most of which do not find practical solutions, we forget that each one of us has been blessed with tremendous sources of energy in the mechanisms of our body and mind. We need to focus on how to harness these sources that we possess to excel in our endeavours.

Our body is a storehouse of energy but unfortunately, we not only do not know how to use it, but oftentimes we waste its energy without bringing any good. Most people use their limbs for purposeless actions. Abusing physical energy is so common that some people think it is the natural course to take. It is really ironical that most of the times people put their bodies to severe stress and misuse its energy in the name of recreation or leisure. In the pretext of resting their bodies, most people just torture it. The ancient sages of India were very particular about the energy of the human body and acknowledged even the minutest expenditure of energy

like that which is expended while we blink our eyes. The first step in preserving our energy is to preserve our physical energy, the energy that is produced by and contained in the body. It is surprising how much physical energy can be

Brooding on the past and worrying about the future are the most common leaks of the mental energy.

saved by just doing a rapid mental calculation about the work and motion involved in any action. Yoga begins with the taming of the physical body. Only a body tethered in silence and moving only on purpose is fit for yoga. Needless swaying of heads and moving of limbs creates a strong disturbance that percolates to the deeper recesses of the mind.

Just like a camera consumes energy even if it is just switched on, similarly our sense organs consume energy even if they just stay put on a particular object. The best way to conserve the energy of the sense organs is to restrain from taking in any sensory input that one does not need. Then, the eyes would see only what has to be seen, the ears would hear only what has to be heard, the tongue would taste only what is to be tasted, the skin would touch only what has to be touched, and the nose would smell only what has to be smelled. Trained in such a fashion, not only would the distraction caused by the senses be reduced to a bare minimum, the sensory experience of such trained senses would be accentuated and superfine with a remarkable intensity.

We constantly blame the mind for distractions and for losing focus. Our complaint is that the mind is wandering all the time. Imagine a person who is served several plates of mouth-watering dishes at the same time, all dishes exuding mind-blowing scents, and served with royal dressings. How can that person concentrate on only one dish then? Such is the predicament of our mind. It is constantly being simultaneously fed several sensory inputs. When the eyes see, all the other four senses do not shut down and so is the case with the other sense-organs. Much like a person, who is aware of the usage of electricity, would switch off the electrical appliances that are not needed; we should switch off our sense-organs that we are not using at that moment. That would lead to an enormous energy surplus in our body.

In preserving the physical energy the importance of sleep cannot be overemphasised. Numerous present-day ailments can be cured by a regular and full dose of sleep. Conservation of individual energy has to be done at the level of breathing also. Long and sustained breathing cycles help the body to be calm and have better reflexes. It is not for nothing that all traditions of martial arts give tremendous importance to the control of breath. This also shows the importance of living in pure and unpolluted environments. To produce a good breathing cycle, we need to also eat nutritious and wholesome food. It is quite common to have one's body spend lot of energy on digesting unwanted or improper food that was supposed to give energy in the first place!

Human beings possess an exceptional intellectual capacity. Most of it is squandered in unnecessary ruminations on things that are of no use either at the individual or the collective level. To focus our thinking and analysis is an art that

has to be perfected in order to get the most of our brains. Precision of thought and a daring to do intellectually daunting tasks preserves and also invigorates our intellectual energy. A thorough grounding in logic helps one to eventually transcend all linear thought. A trained intellect can ably rein the mind.

In the pursuit of the preservation of individual energy the biggest challenge is preserving the energy of the mind, mental energy. Thoughts consume the mind. To preserve the mental energy and also to preserve the mind itself, one needs to constantly question the need for a particular thought to arise in the mind. Brooding on the past and worrying about the future are the most common leaks of the mental energy. When our mind is drained of its energy, it goes into ill-health commonly known as psychological ailments that could range from a minor bout of depression to an acute incidence of schizophrenia. Daydreaming and fantasising also rapidly consume the mental energy.

To train the mind from abstaining from activities that needlessly consume its energy, one should root it on a theme of focus that the mind would hold on to when it does not have any purposeful activity to do. Too many attachments clutter the mind. A minimalist lifestyle and a detached attitude help the mind to focus its energy and prioritise its goals. Strong attachments are like forgotten anchors that do not allow the ship of the mind to move forward. Uncluttering one's mind from attachments and unrealistic expectations helps the mind to behave in a trained and disciplined manner. With less and less of garbage the mind would not have to suffer its stench! If one can preserve the mental energy, then it leads to the preservation of the intellectual and physical energy as well. Such conserving of energy is one of the first steps towards a spiritual life.

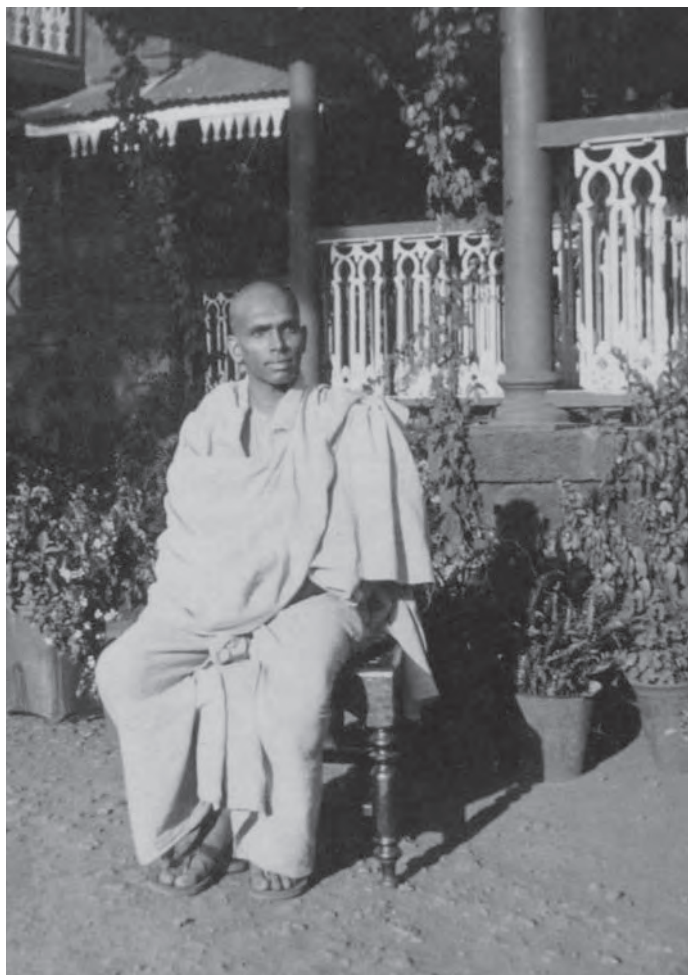


Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

THIS UPANISHAD IS A VERY IMPORTANT one with only twelve verses. It is the shortest but an extremely philosophically significant Upanishad which has been expounded by a later commentator Gaudapada in his *Mandukya Upanishad Karika* and that has been commented upon by Shankaracharya. It is a highly philosophical Upanishad. In one later Upanishad, it is mentioned that for achieving spiritual liberation, this single Upanishad is quite enough—that is referred to in the *Muktika Upanishad*.¹ For the attainment of the sole object—the attainment of highest truth, the supreme goal of existence—this single Upanishad of *Mandukya* is enough. Shankaracharya says that the Upanishad *Mandukya* with *Karika* embodies in itself ‘the quintessence of the substance of the import of Vedanta.’²

The foreword to a book on the *Mandukya Upanishad* has been written by Mr V Subrahmanya Iyer, a great intellectual, philosopher. We all studied under him in Mysore, including the translator Swami Nikhilananda.³ He was an extraordinary person. By job, he was only the registrar of the Mysore University but was a brilliant philosopher and an intellectual. He has written in the preface how he came to this Upanishad through his scientific training, how he studied under a great spiritual teacher, Shankaracharya’s follower, one great Shringeri teacher. All these things are mentioned here in the beginning, in the foreword. One of his books, has been published by his daughter: *Wisdom*. It has been published for free distribution: V Subrahmanya Iyer’s second volume. The first



Swami Ranganathananda in Ramakrishna Mission, Karachi

volume was *Tattvajnana*, philosophy of truth, published ten years earlier than this book; his writings, correspondence with famous scientists and philosophers of the West—all these things. Subrahmanya Iyer passed away sometime in 1950. By that time a number of swamis of the Order had gone through his course of philosophy and study in Mysore from 1932 including Swami Bhuteshananda, who was in the first batch with Subrahmanya Iyer’s studies. Iyer was a wonderful person and very devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the swamis of the Order. He used to say: ‘The greatest philosopher

is Sri Ramakrishna. The knowledge of truth, both external and internal, in the complete form is found in Sri Ramakrishna.' He often referred to Sri Ramakrishna in the class.

In the introduction written by Swami Nikhilananda, some of the aspects of this great book are mentioned. The text begins with four chapters by Gaudapada. The first is called *Agama Prakarana*. *Prakarana* means chapter or section, dealing with *Agama*, which means the Shruti or the Veda. Merely depending upon the text of the Veda, the truth is expounded in the first section. That is the first section. The second section is very important: *Vaitathya Prakarana*, the section dealing with the unreality of all duality. *Vaitathya* means unreality and this section is based on reason; by the exercise of human intelligence and a penetrating study of experience, we realise the unreality of all duality. The third is *Advaita Prakarana*, establishing the truth of non-duality of pure consciousness of the Atman. The world is unreal. Then what is real? Pure consciousness—the one and non-dual. That is the only reality. That is the third section. And the last section: *Alatashanti Prakarana*; various philosophical objections to this great Advaitic truth are handled in a long chapter and discussed, finally establishing the truth of Advaita, non-duality. This is the *Mandukya Upanishad Karika*.

The Upanishad is expounded in the *Agama Prakarana*, the first section. One by one the verses are taken and expounded in a series of verses by Gaudapada. We will get the original texts, Gaudapada's texts expounding the original text, in the first section.

Agama is a word for the Vedas. The first text is: *Harih Om*; Salutations to the supreme Lord, Hari, the Self in the heart of all beings—that is the meaning of 'Hari'. *Omityetadaksharamidam sarvam*; All this universe is nothing but the syl-
lable 'Om'. Om is all this. *Tasya-upavyakhyanam*.

Its clear exposition is being attempted here. What is that? *Bhutam bhavadbhavishyaditi sarvamomkara*. All that is past, all that is present, all that is future is verily Om. All time is comprehended: present, past, and future. That which is beyond the triple conception of time also is Om. Om is time; Om is eternity. What belongs to the past, present, and future; what belongs to the transcendental—beyond time and space. That is just the first mantra, first text.

'*Harih Aum. Aum*, the word, is all this. A clear explanation of it (is the following): All that is past, present and future is verily *Aum*. That which is beyond the triple conception of time is also verily *Aum*' (9). That is why when you write 'Om', you write 'Om' and put a dot on the top. The dot represents the transcendental, the *bindu*, the dot. The A, U and M represent past, present, and future respectively. That is explained in this treatise itself.

Om: Shankara's commentary says in the beginning itself. 'As all diversified objects that we see around us, indicated by names, are not different from their (corresponding) names, and further as the different names are not different from *Aum*, therefore all these are verily *Aum*' (10). The first sound is Om.

'As a thing is known through its name so the highest Brahman is known through *Aum* alone. Therefore, the highest Brahman is verily *Aum*. This (treatise) is the explanation of that, ... that is, of *Aum* ... which is of the same nature of the higher as well as the lower Brahman' (ibid.). Brahman in manifestation and Brahman transcendent. Om represents Brahman in manifestation and Brahman that is transcendent.

Upavyākhyānam means clear explanation, because *Aum* is the means to the knowledge of Brahman on account of its having the closest proximity to Brahman. The word '*Prastutam*' meaning 'commences' ... That which is conditioned by the triple (conceptions of) time, such

as past, present and future is also verily *Aum* for reasons already explained. All that is beyond the three (divisions of) time, i.e., unconditioned by time, and yet known by their effects, which is called '*Avyākṛta*', the unmanifested etc.,— that also is verily *Aum* (ibid.).

In the next text, the Shruti says: *Sarvam hyetad brahma*. First it was Om and now the word is changed to Atman. *Sarvam hyetad brahma*; all this universe is Brahman. *Ayam atma brahma*; this Self of human being is Brahman. This is considered to be a very great utterance: *Ayam atma brahma*; this Atman in you is Brahman. *Soyamatma chatuspat*. This Brahman has four quarters just like one dollar has four twenty-five cents; one is a quarter. The four quarters make the whole dollar. Similarly, Atman has four quarters. 'All this verily is Brahman' (12). That is the first great utterance of the Upanishad: Everything is Brahman. We only change the words. If I say now that everything is quantum field energy, every physicist will accept it. But Brahman is more than quantum field energy because it is pure consciousness whereas field energy has no consciousness; it is dull, dead matter.

'All that has been said to consist merely of *Aum* ... is Brahman. That Brahman which has been described ... is now pointed out, as being directly known, ... "This Self is Brahman"' (ibid.). Brahman is not far away. He is there in you as your own Self. He is the closest to you, not far away. All through the Upanishads, they speak of Brahman, then it is said that Brahman exists in you as your consciousness, as your Self. This is divided into four quarters. And pointing out the inner Self through the gesture of the hand, the teacher says: 'This Brahman is this Atman in you.' And this Atman has four quarters. Cow has four feet. *Pada* means feet, but not exactly feet. We have four quarters of a coin known as *karshapana*. In those days, one rupee consisted

of four, four annas known as *karshapana*. They were coins of the Vedic times. Knowledge of the fourth state or the quarter is called *turiya*, the transcendental, which is attained by merging the previous three into one. All the first three merge into the four. The fourth state is *aparoksha*. *Karshapana* is one fourth, a quarter. Quarter *karshapana* is merged in a half *karshapana*. Half *karshapana* is merged in the three-fourth and all the four is merged in the full *karshapana*.

Now, this text is explained by Gaudapada in a series of verses. The Upanishad text continues: *Jagaritasthano bahishprajnah saptanga ekonavimshatimukhah sthulabhugvaishvanarah prathamah padah*.⁴ What is the first quarter of this Atman? He is called Vaishvanara, whose sphere of activity is the waking state. The self as expressed in the waking state is given the name 'Vaishvanara'. It is the given name, that is all. Who is conscious of external objects. In the waking state, we are conscious of external objects. Who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths and whose experience consists of gross material objects. These various divisions like five, seven, seventeen, and nineteen are all given in the Upanishads. So, that is *jagari-tasthanah*, one quarter. The Atman manifests in you and me as *jagrat*-self.

That is one quarter. But then that is not the only thing. *Svapnasthano'ntahprajnah*. The second quarter is the Taijasa, whose sphere is dream. 'Taijasa' means light. In the light of the Atman, you see objects. There is no external light. No sun, no moon. *Tejas* means energy and light. The special quarter is the dream, which is conscious of internal objects. We do not see any external objects, only internal objects. Again, seven limbs and nineteen mouths experience the subtle objects. The whole experience of dream is the experience of subtle objects. Waking experience is gross and dream experience is subtle. *Svapna-sthana* means dream state.



Swami Nikhilananda (1895–1973)

Then comes the third stage. *Yatra supto na kanchana kamam kamayate na kanchana svapnam pashyati tat sushuptam*. That is called *sushupti*, which means deep sleep, when the sleeper does not desire any objects. There is no desire for food in sleep. There is no desire at all in sleep. And one does not see any dreams. The third quarter or the *sushupti* state is called Prajna, whose sphere is deep sleep; the Self as Prajna. Vaishvanara, Taijasa, and Prajna—three names are given, one for each state. The Atman manifesting in the waking state is Vaishvanara. The Atman manifesting as the dream Self is called Taijasa. The Atman manifesting in the sleep state is called Prajna. In sleep, that is, in the Prajna manifestation of the Self, all experiences become unified and undifferentiated, who is verily a mass of consciousness intact.

What is sleep? Just a mass of consciousness without any object. Objectless consciousness is what you get in sleep. It is full of bliss. In sleep,

we feel entire bliss. We experience bliss. It is a path leading to the knowledge of the two other states. *Chetomukhabh*. If you want to come to the dream and the waking states, you have to pass through the sleep state. From the sleep state, you can enter back into the dream and into the waking states. In today's analysis of brain waves in EEG, you find that when there is a certain type of waves, you are in the sleep state. When there is certain other type of waves, you come to the waking state. Dream presentations are different in the wave pattern. Then you come to the conscious state; it is quite a different pattern. And sometimes you can see the waves moving from one side to another when examining a sleeping person. So many such studies have been made today.

Chetomukha is a very important word. It is characterised by empirical consciousness. It is the doorway leading to the experience of dreams. Therefore, it is called *chetomukha*. It is Prajna because it is conscious of the past, present, and future as well as of all the objects. Prajna has got all these experiences. As soon as an object comes, it experiences. If the object is not there, it keeps quiet. It is like that. When the teacher is sitting in the class, if students are there, he teaches; if not, he keeps quiet. He will read a book, that is all!

Prajna is undifferentiated consciousness. In the other states, consciousness exists but it is an experience of variety. Consciousness without duality is sleep. Consciousness with duality is dream and waking. Today the subject of consciousness is so important. So many seminars, discussions, and books are coming out on the nature of consciousness. On 1 January 1982 we had a seminar in Bangalore in the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences. I spoke there on 'The Science of Consciousness in the Light of Vedanta and Yoga.'⁵ This subject is very important: the nature of consciousness. Prajna thus described is the third quarter. These are three quarters.

The sixth verse says: *Esha sarveshvarah esha sarvajnah esho'ntaryami esha yonih sarvasya prabhavapyayau hi bhutanam*. At that state—without referring to your dream or my dream, my sleep or your sleep—if you look at just that state without any of the individual association; what is that? Consciousness in that state is the lord of all. This is the knower of all. This is the controller within. This is the source of all and this is that from which all things originate in which they finally disappear. From Prajna, waking and dream come; into Prajna waking and dream go. That is the final state. Therefore it is called the god of all. 'This in its natural state is the Lord ... of all,'⁶ says Shankara's commentary. The entire physical and super-physical universe is called the *all*.

'He (*Īśvara*) is not something separate from the universe as others hold' (25–6). Dualists hold that god and the universe are separate. Shankara says no, the world has come from the Lord, it subsists in the Lord and goes back to the Lord. That state of consciousness from which two other states come and into which they both merge is the Lord. The Shruti says: "O good one, *Prāṇa* ... is that in which mind is bound." He is omniscient because he is the knower of all beings in all their different conditions' (26). He is the *antaryamin*, the inner self. Therefore, he is called the origin. From him proceeds the universe. Being so, he is verily that from which all proceed and into which all things disappear. If you carefully look at it purely as a scientific investigation, that state of sleep is called Prajna from which all the universe came and into which all went in. Therefore, that is the characteristic of Brahman from which the universe comes, into which it returns, and in which it lives.

Now comes the Gaudapada Karika on these verses. After this will come the fourth *pada*, which is *turiya*. In the explanation of the foregoing texts there are these verses by Gaudapada: *Bahishprajno vibhurvishvo hyantahprajnastu*

taijasah, ghanaprajnastatha prajna eka eva tridha smritah. Vishva, the first quarter is he, who is all-pervading and who experiences the external gross objects in the waking state. Taijasa, the second quarter, is he who cognises the internal, the subtle objects, say for example our subconscious. Who experiences the subconscious? Your Self. Your Self in that state is Taijasa. Who experiences the conscious state? Your Self. Your Self in that state is Vaishvanara. Finally, the state when all these disappear in sleep is the Prajna. Prajna is he, who is a mass of consciousness, without any object. It is one alone, who is thus known in the three states. The same Self is known in the three states by three different names. But the Self is one. That is the decision of this text.

These subjects you will find in no book in the world. In the West, it started from Sigmund Freud—a little study of the mind, the unconscious, and the subconscious. Prajna is a mass of consciousness. A portion of the mass becomes an object to see in the waking and in the dream states. In Prajna, the whole thing is a mass; no separate cut-off as an object to see. Suppose the whole solar system is a part of the sun and there is no planet at all and only the sun. But the sun separates and reflects on the planet. Similarly, in the waking and in the dream states, consciousness splits into the centre. But in this, it is absorbed into itself. That is the deep sleep state.

The implication of the passage is this, says Shankaracharya: 'That *Ātman* is (as witness) distinct from the three states' (27). Witness, *sakshi*, distinct from the three states. Otherwise, how do you know all the three states have come unless you are separate and there in all the three states? You cannot relate, no relation is possible, unless you are there to see all the three states. That is the Atman: pure, unrelated, is established in the three states in succession. The same Atman moves in three states in succession.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, a famous passage comes. Just as a mighty fish goes in a river, sometimes from this bank to that bank, and from that bank to this bank, freely moves, so the Atman moves in the three states.⁷ That is called the *mahamatsya drishtanta*, illustration of the big fish. Suppose you say, 'I dreamt'. Certainly Vaishvanara cannot say that because Vaishvanara never dreamt. It is Taijasa that dreamt. Similarly, if you say 'I slept'. No Vaishvanara, no Taijasa can experience sleep. There is a witness that experiences all the three states and functions as the subject of each of these states. That witness I am. That is the deduction from it; 'I am that'. This results from experience, which unites through memory. The Shruti corroborates with the illustration of the big fish in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

The next *shloka* says: *Dakshinakshimukhe vishvo manasyantastu taijasah, akashe cha hridi prajnastridha dehe vyavasthitah*. Within the body, we can locate these three selves. Vishva is he, who cognises the world in the right eye. The right eye is considered to be the location for the Self in the waking state. Taijasa is he, who cognises in the mind, within. Prajna is he, who constitutes the space, *akasha*, in the heart, in the innermost point of the system; the whole thing is withdrawn.

When you go to sleep, you can see that. Your energy gets withdrawn from the tip of the fingers first. Then goes inward, inward, inward and inward, and finally it goes deep into yourself. The whole consciousness withdraws deep into yourself and next morning, returns exactly like that. Slowly, slowly, coming out until the last point comes. You can say, touch a pin on the tip of your finger, you will not be conscious. Later on, you become conscious, when consciousness has reached all through like heat pervading an object. That is a very interesting experience.

Thus the one Atman is conceived as threefold

in the one human body. It is only one Atman. Especially after a good sleep, you do not have any energy in the body when you are asleep. Even to open the eyelid, you do not have any strength. Particularly when children wake up in the morning, how difficult it is for them to open the eyelids. What has happened to you? All energy is gone. It is all withdrawn. Nothing has gone. It is withdrawn. Where is it withdrawn to? To the innermost part of the system. From there, slowly it comes out. The return journey, you can see, going, coming. We treat it similar to cosmic evolution and involution, coming out and going in.

This verse is intended to show that the three-fold experience of Vishva, Taijasa, and Prajna is realised in the waking state alone. It is a different waking state. There is one waking stage in which Vaishvanara is dominant. But the waking state of your true Self that experiences all the three—that is the real waking state. *Dakshinakshi* means the means of perception of gross objects in the right eye. The presence of Vishva, the cogniser of gross objects is chiefly felt there. The Shruti also says that the person that is in the right eye is known as *Indha*, the luminous one.

That exactly is the concept studied today. We have studied the brain and it is very interesting to know that the right hand is controlled by the left half of the brain; right half of the brain controls the left side—just the opposite. All right side activities are controlled by the left brain. One is logical and the other is emotional, intuitive. That is the present-day theory.

'Though the presence of *Viśva* is equally felt in all sense organs without distinction yet the right eye is particularly singled out (as the chief instrument for its perception).'⁸ Vishva is there all through the body, but especially in the right eye.

(The right eye is made here to represent all the sense-organs). The one, who has his abode in the right eye, having perceived (external) forms,

closes the eye; and then recollecting them within the mind, sees the very same (external objects) as in a dream, as the manifestation of the (subtle) impressions (of memory). As is the case here (waking), so also is the case with dream. Therefore, *Taijasa*, the perceiver in the mind within, is verily the same as *Viśva*. With the cessation of the activity known as memory, the perceiver (in the waking and the dream states) is unified with *Prājña* in the *Ākāśa* of the heart (ibid.).

Both *Vishva* and *Taijasa* become unified in *Prajna*, which is ‘a mass of consciousness, because there is, then, a cessation of mental activities’ (ibid.) in deep sleep. ‘Both perception and memory are forms of thought, in the absence of which the seer remains indistinguishably in the form of *Prāṇa* in the heart alone’ (ibid.). Mere seer is there, no seen, in that state. ‘Shruti also says, “*Prāṇa* alone withdraws all these within.” *Taijasa* is identical with *Hiranyagarbha*—that is, the first product of cosmic evolution is called *Hiranyagarbha*, cosmic mind—‘on account of its existence being realised in mind’. It is purely the cosmic mind. ‘Mind is the characteristic indication (of both). This is supported by such scriptural passages as, “This *Puruṣa* (*Hiranyagarbha*) is all mind”’ (ibid.). The seed of the universe can be destroyed only by knowledge alone.

Brahman is *sat*, pure existence. Now we will see what is the fourth *pada*. ‘That which is designated as *Prājña* (when it is viewed as the cause of the phenomenal world) will be described as *Turiya* separately when it is not viewed as the cause’ (31). When causality is taken away, then this *Prajna* itself is *Turiya*. When causality functions, there is the cause of the waking and the dream, it turns back to *Prajna* and the like. ‘The causal condition is also verily experienced in this body from such cognition of the man who is awakened from the deep sleep’ (32). What did he say: ‘I did not know anything at the time of



Werner Karl Heisenberg (1901–76)

deep sleep.’ Causal condition, you can see there. Therefore, it is said that the one *Atman* is perceived as threefold in this one body only. All the three are experienced in the same body. In the West, scientists became very much excited when they knew that the *Upanishads* discussed causality because it is a very important subject in science. For instance, in the principle of indeterminism in Heisenberg’s physics, causality is very important there. And it is highly described here; the whole subject is discussed in this *Upanishad*: causal standpoint.

Then comes the third verse: *Vishvo hi sthula-bhūngnityam taijasaḥ praviviktabhuk, ananda-bhuktatha prajnastridha bhogam nibodhata.*

Vishva always experiences the gross object, that is, the waking state; Taijasa always experiences the subtle aspect; and Prajna is the blissful. Know these to be the threefold experiences. Real bliss is when there is no object. Just see! In sleep, you get real bliss. In waking state, you don't get real bliss, in spite of eating and drinking; so many experiences you have. Whereas in your own state—when you live in that state, you are all bliss. Everybody goes to sleep. You deprive a man of food, he won't mind. Deprive a man of sleep, he is very bad. You are a mass of real bliss. It is your nature. Vedanta also comes to this conclusion. The external objects do not give you that joy as when you realise your own form without any external connection.

Then: *Trishu dhamasu yadbhojyam bhokta yashcha prakirtitah, vedaitadubhayam yastu sa bhunjano na lipyate*. He who knows both the experiencer and the objects of experience that have been described, associated with the three states, is not affected through experiencing the objects. Those who know this truth, they won't get attached to the one or the other. It is like the Taoist sage who said: I dreamt I was a butterfly. Whether the butterfly dreams it is I or I dream I am the butterfly, I do not know which is the correct position.⁹

In the three states, Shankara says, namely waking, dream, and sleep, 'one and the same object of experience appears in threefold forms as the gross, the subtle, and the blissful. ... the experiencer (of the three states) known (differently) as *Viśva*, *Taijasa* and *Prājña* has been described as one on account of unity of consciousness implied in such cognition as, "I am that";¹⁰ I am common to all the three states. There is the absence of very distinction in respect to the perceiver. When you correlate three experiences in one form, that means, you are the one experiencer of all the three experiences. 'He who knows the two (experiencer and the objects of experience), appearing as many in the form

of subject and objects of experience, though enjoying them, is not affected thereby' (ibid.). You know your detachment: 'I am not the Vaishva. I am not the Taijasa. I am the one that exists in all the three.' With this knowledge you won't get caught in any particular experience. It is called detachment. 'Because all objects of experience are experienced by one subject alone. As (the heat of the) fire does not increase or decrease by consuming wood ... so also nothing is added to or taken away (from the knowingness or awareness of the *Ātman*) by its experience of that which is its object' (ibid.). The *Ātman* does not become extra by experiencing external objects, internal objects; it is always the same—unity of the experiencer in the three states.

Then: *Prabhavaḥ sarvabhāvanam satamiti viṣṭhāyāḥ, sarvaṃ janayati pranaśchetomśhun puruṣaḥ prithak*. It is thoroughly established that coming into effect can be predicated only of all positive entities that exist. You can speak of cause and effect connection only of positive entities. If something exists, you can say, 'it was this' and 'it became this.' And about non-positive entities, you cannot say that. The *Prana* manifests all. It is the energy that manifests all. *Puruṣa* creates the conscious beings, *jivas*, in their manifold form separately. Self manifests as the three. And *Prana* manifests all the objects of perception. Waking, dream, and taking the Self back from all these, into the deep sleep state. 'Manifestation can be predicated of positive entities comprehended as the different forms of *Viśva*, *Taijasa* and *Prājña* ... Neither in reality nor in illusion can the son of a barren woman be said to be born' (37–8). It is an example in all Sanskrit Vedantic literature. It is a contradiction in terms. How can there be a son of a barren woman? Impossible. Neither in reality nor in illusion is it possible. It is a fact. 'For, if things could come out of non-entity, Brahman whose existence is inferred from experience will itself be rendered a non-entity' (38).

From nothing, nothing can come. Only from something, something can come. That is the logic. 'The *Puruṣa* manifests all these entities called as living beings, which are different from inanimate objects, but of the same nature as itself (*Puruṣa*), like fire and its sparks and like the sun with its reflection in water. *Prāṇa*, the causal self, manifests all other entities just as the spider producing the web' (ibid.). These are all referred to from various passages in the Vedas.

Vibhūtim prasavam tvanye manyante sṛṣṭichintakah, svapnamayasarupeti sṛṣṭir-anyairvikalpita. What is the nature of creation? Several thinkers have several opinions. Those who think of the process of creation believe it to be the manifestation of the super human power of god. They are dualists. God by super human power created this world, while others look upon it as of the same nature as dream and illusion. We create just like that from the mind and withdraw. There is no real entity there. Juggler throws the thread up: one of the ancient jugglers in India. Many Western people write about it. Nobody can show it now; that jugglery. They throw a thread up. Some foreign writers have said that they saw once: A juggler comes and throws a thread up and the thread goes up, on and on. After sometime, two boys come. One by one they climb this thread and disappear. Later on there is a fight and limbs begin to fall down. Blood falls down. And after sometime, the boys come out as if nothing has happened. This is the famous jugglery, the thread jugglery.

(To be continued)

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4. *Mandukya Upanishad*, 1.3.
5. See Swami Ranganathananda, 'The Science of Consciousness in the Light of Vedanta and Yoga', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 87/6 (June 1982), 257-65; 87/7 (July 1982), 294-301; and 87/8 (August 1982), 341-7.
6. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 25.
7. See *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.3.18.
8. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 29.
9. See Zhuang Zhou, *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 2.
10. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 36.

Acharya Shankara in Debate



The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life

Swami Nityasthananda

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE is a mystery and everything within it is mysterious. We cannot claim—rather it is presumptuous to do so—that we know fully about anything in this world. As we go on discovering, the mystery deepens. As we go on gaining knowledge, we become more and more aware of our ignorance. Perhaps, it is not unreasonable, though paradoxical, to say that knowledge also increases our ignorance, and knowledge means progressive awareness of our ignorance. The ignorance prior to knowledge is *tamas*, like darkness due to a low vibration of light, and the ignorance that follows knowledge is *sattva*, like darkness due to a high vibration of light.

Though we cannot know anything completely, still it is not wise to stop learning. The very attempt to know itself is immensely beneficial. Even though we cannot know fire in its totality, the knowledge that it burns is of great advantage to us. Unprecedented changes brought by modern scientific discoveries and the revolutionary changes taking place due to advancement in information technology are too obvious to be mentioned. For whom are all these enormous wealth of knowledge and its consequent material development meant? Who is reaping these fruits? Is it not necessary to know something about that entity, the human being? If we start knowing the human being, we confront yet another vast world of unfathomable depth. After wandering so much in the search of knowledge in the objective world, it seems, we are turning our attention more towards the subjective world,

accentuating research in life sciences, opening many areas of knowledge in that field. Similarly, research in neurology is taking long strides and digging deep into the brain, and presenting before us the most mysterious world of neurons. Going still further, psychologists are ever striving to measure the depth of the human mind, giving rise to many branches of psychology. Now scientists are even entering into the domain of religion and spirituality and undertaking number of researches in the field of consciousness also. In this way the human being is moving towards the very origin of knowledge, and this is spirituality.

Real spirituality means an attempt to go beyond the mind. The scriptures declare that the spiritual experience is beyond the limits of mind and speech. Therefore the question arises as to the relation between spiritual practice and the mind. The fact is we have to go beyond the mind through the mind. The scriptures also declare: ‘The Atman is to be attained only through the mind.’¹ It is somewhat like going beyond the river by swimming across it. If a person is tied to a pole with a rope, one will untie the rope with great difficulty, throw away the rope, and become free. Similarly groping the mind alone we have to go beyond the mind. Spiritual aspiration, knowledge, devotion, spirit of dispassion, and related ideas are within the domain of the mind. Both the spiritual and the secular life depend upon the mind. It is said that the human being is the mind with a body, not the body with a mind.

In all matters, mind only matters. Our happiness and miseries, our relationship with others,

our decisions and determination, all our attitudes and even the thought of God—all these depend upon the mind. The *Yogavasishtha* says: 'In all kinds of happiness and misery and in all modes of activities, mind is the only doer and enjoyer. Know for certain that man is nothing but mind.'² It is further said in the same text: 'O Rama, mind is everything. If that is treated within, the whole world will be rectified' (4.4.5). Depending upon our mental conditions, the world outside appears sometimes pleasant and sometimes unpleasant; sometimes good and sometimes evil; sometimes friendly and sometimes inimical; and sometimes wholesome and sometimes loathsome. The following are the words of the *Brahma Purana*: 'That which makes one happy now can be a source of misery next moment. Something that annoys one can also be pleasing to him. Therefore there is nothing miserable and pleasurable in this world.'³ Lord Buddha also said that it is the mind that rules and moves the world and that the good and evil of the world are due to the mind alone. Swami Yatiswarananda says: 'One may read no end of books. One may listen to no end of lectures. But if one's mind is not inclined to the spiritual ideal, everything has been in vain. So, in India the spiritual teachers tell us: "you must win the grace of your own mind". It is not enough if you have the grace of God and the grace of a teacher. We might have been fortunate in receiving many spiritual instructions. But unless we have the grace of our own mind everything comes to nothing.'⁴

Inner Change

In spiritual life one important thing to be noted is not to get upset by external factors. We are prone to get affected by the words and behaviour of people, and by different events, which activate in us different feelings like attachment, aversion, and fear that disturb our spiritual practices.

Maintaining inner poise is indispensable in spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo says:

The first thing to do in the sadhana is to get a settled peace and silence in the mind. Otherwise you may have experiences, but nothing will be permanent. It is in the silent mind that the true consciousness can be built. A quiet mind does not mean that there will be no thoughts or mental movements at all, but that these will be on the surface and you will feel your true being within separate from them, observing but not carried away, able to watch and judge them and reject all that has to be rejected and to accept and keep to all that is true consciousness and true experience.⁵

Ken Wilber says: 'You will find that people and events don't cause you to be upset, but are merely the occasions for you to upset yourself.'⁶

It is our emotional reactions to external things that upset us. It is not external noise itself

Swami Yatiswarananda (1889–1966)



but the negative feelings about it that disturb our sleep. Same is the case in various other situations also; it is our inner reaction that troubles us and impedes our spiritual practice. The thought 'no one can make me miserable without my consent', substantiates this idea. If something grieves us, we as Vedantins, have to look within ourselves to find the cause for it. If there is a subjective change, the object is bound to change. When a snake bites us we do not run after the snake to kill it, rather our immediate concern is to prevent the effect of the poison, perhaps forgetting the snake altogether. Similarly, if somebody hurts us and if we go on blaming that person for that, it only aggravates the pain, instead of curing it. What we have to do is to increase our mental strength to withstand the external blows. Internal transformation involves three things: attitudinal change, control of negative reactions, and turning our attention to a higher ideal.

Identification with External Things

Why do external factors disturb us so much? Because of our identification with them. Some objects, persons, power, or positions become part of our personality, rather sometimes, the centres of our personality. We feel that we are lost when they are lost. We get alienated from our personality. We become slave to the wealth we have created; we get imprisoned in the house we have built; we sell ourselves to the institution we have originated; the book we have written becomes our very soul; similarly, power becomes the centre of our personality. We alienate from ourselves by identification with something other than ourselves. This is called self-alienation. The things we identify ourselves with are always subject to change, because they are part of the changing environment, and these changes will enkindle different kinds of feelings within us. In Vyasa's commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* we come

across this following passage: 'Identifying oneself with seen and unseen objects, one rejoices feeling one's self enhanced by possessing them, and by losing them one grieves feeling that he himself is lost. This is quite natural for the unawakened.'⁷

There must be spiritual awakening in us. We must constantly contemplate on our true nature, the Atman, beyond body, mind, and the senses. This will weaken our identification with the body and thereby with external objects also. During meditation, we must feel our separate existence dissociating ourselves from the mental states. Two birds of golden plumage are sitting on the tree of our personality. One among them is constantly flying here and there eating the fruits, both sweet and bitter, and experiencing pain and happiness alternately. While the other one is simply sitting on the upper branch calmly without eating anything, without any movement, enjoying its own bliss. These two birds represent two aspects of the human soul. The lower bird represents the embodied soul identifying itself with the body and experiencing both happiness and misery. The upper bird is the epitome of higher self, not one with the body, experiencing nothing, witnessing everything, and not swayed by anything.⁸ The upper bird is our real nature, and we have to imagine ourselves to be that. If we remain like the lower bird, we get caught in the whirlwind of worldly influences.

If we are like the lower bird, we get alienated from our real being, and we become 'others', and, consequently, any rise and fall of other things will have their deep impact on us. While commenting on the word *sneha*, attachment, occurring in the fifty-seventh verse of the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita, Madhusudana Sarasvati makes a striking remark: 'When this *sneha* is there, the loss and gain of other things will be attributed to oneself.'⁹ The loss and gain are related to external things other than the self, not to

the self at all, who never loses or gains anything. If wealth is lost, if it could, it is wealth that has to grieve over the loss, not us. Similarly, if power is curtailed or deprived, it is power's business to despair, not ours. We need not get elated even by their acquisition. This is applicable to all matters. We feel happy or suffer attributing to ourselves the gain or loss related to external matter. We have to mourn for loss of ourselves in matter. We are lost in the current of different thoughts, emotions, external activities, and events. Loss of self is the real loss. As we observe the current of river standing on its shore, we have to observe with detachment the life-current, constantly flowing in its own way, standing rooted in our inner self.

Inner Emptiness

The main reason for inordinate desire for enjoying and possessing external things is the inner emptiness we feel. We somehow try to ignore this inner emptiness by outer possessions. We substitute the inner loss by outer gains. The main cause for this inner emptiness is the want of fulfilment. If our inner being is suffused with the sense of fulfilment, we do not hanker for external things; for name, fame, power, and position. In fact, it is unwise to think that the inner emptiness can be filled by the possession of external things. Spiritual resources alone can do this. When we are in touch with this resource, inner emptiness will take to its heels. Then the loss and gain of external matters will not unsettle us. To give an illustration, a reservoir remains full always, if the springs at the bottom are open and discharging water unceasingly. We cannot expect it to be full always by feeding it with water from outside.

To make our life fulfilled, we have to live a meaningful life, an ideal life, going beyond the sense-bound existence. According to Victor E Frankl, a meaningful life is imperative for mental health.¹⁰ If life loses its meaning we waste it

in so many ways, as we waste valueless objects. There are several ways of wasting one's life. Aimless wandering without apparent purpose is one such thing. Taking some work as a pretext, that may not be unavoidable, people move about. Some people undertake travelling in the name of pilgrimage. Some waste their life by extravagant talk. Some remain always busy with some work being unable to sit quiet. And yet others waste their life being addicted to something. Nowadays, because of the television, the Internet, mobile phones, and the like; there are a number of alluring opportunities to waste one's life. There are some people who, finding no fulfilment in spiritual life, spend their time in preaching others what they could not accomplish themselves.

The search for meaning is the most important urge in man, says Victor E Frankl. And he avers that if this urge is not given a right expression, it gets perverted into lust for power, pleasure, or wealth. It is from this perspective that Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly tells us that the very purpose of human existence is to realise God. As an illustration he tells the story of some friends going to the mango orchard and counting the trees, branches, and leaves, except the one among them who started eating the mangoes. He says: 'You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Do that and be happy.'¹¹ As mango is the very essence of the tree and for the sake of that alone the trees are reared, so also God or divinity is the very essence of our personality, and the very purpose of human life is to attain that, which alone, in fact, makes life meaningful. A sincere attempt to attain that also makes life worth living.

When life becomes meaningful, everything related to it also becomes meaningful and inviolable, all the experiences of happiness, misery, and so on, also will appear in a different colour. If the real meaning of a painting is not known to us, we may think that some of the peripheral

lines and patches of painting are not necessary at all. However, every line and colour of that painting assumes value when the central theme of the painting is known. The part is meaningful only as a part of the whole. All the limbs of the body are meaningful only as parts of the whole body. Similarly, our individual life becomes meaningful only when we relate ourselves with the Whole, the universal Being. Instead, if we relate ourselves with fragmentary things of the world, our life also will get fragmented. As Sri Ramakrishna says, our ego remains unripe being related to the things of the world (819), and it becomes ripe associated with the Whole. 'A bird sitting on a branch does not get frightened by the shaking branch because the bird trusts not the branch but its own wings', and the wings are dependent on the vast atmosphere. Similarly we must remain in the world but not of it.

Five Basic Needs

According to Erich Fromm, there are five higher basic needs, and with the fulfilment of these, life becomes meaningful.

Need for Relatedness • The human being must be related to something; there must be a sense of belongingness. One must be a part of a family, an institution, or a group. If one has no role to play in the family, institution, or in one's workplace; if no one notices a person, that person would feel rejected and will have an agonising sense of loneliness. Such socially rejected persons sometimes join some anti-social group or institution and thereby find some meaning in this life. In the present-day society, there is an unnatural tendency of talking to distant people through technology, yet not being in talking terms with the family members—feeling near to distant ones and distancing from the near ones! The great hero, Karna of Mahabharata, joins hands with the wicked Kauravas being rejected by his mother and others.

Erich Fromm says: 'Man has to be related, he has to find union with others, in order to be sane. This need to be one with others is his strongest passion, stronger than sex and often even stronger than his wish to live.'¹² Some are even prepared to die associating themselves with some terrorist organisation. We must reach out to develop a good human relationship with others in the family or institution in which we are, and engage ourselves in meaningful activities. This is essential for effective spiritual practice. It is a basic fact that it is good human relationship that gives us happiness, not comforts and luxuries, and all sorts of entertainment, because we are human beings. There are only two relationships which can make us happy: human and divine. Relationship with machines, gadgets, and other material objects, however grand they may be, will not make us happy sans good human relationship. Discarding all human relationship with the spirit of detachment and seeking only divine relationship, one will attain everlasting happiness and this will ennoble our human relationships also.

Need for transcendence • The human being has to transcend the animal nature. Instead of simply being a creature one must be creative. Creativity is not just confined to the field of different kinds of art alone; one can be creative in any field, even in ordinary activities also. This will not only prevent our life from becoming mechanical, but will also give us a sense of fulfilment. Otherwise, we will be like helpless creatures tossed by the dualities of life. To lead an effective spiritual life, transcending the dualities of life is very essential. Sri Aurobindo says: 'One who has not the courage to face patiently and firmly life and its difficulties will never be able to go through the still greater inner difficulties of the sadhana. The very first lesson in this Yoga is to face life and its trials with a quiet mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine Shakti.'¹³

Need for being rooted • It is very essential for us to be firmly rooted in our higher ideal. A tree firmly rooted in the ground will not be toppled by a storm. If we are not firmly rooted, we will be overwhelmed by the tempest of various influences, adversities, and temptations; and our life will become rudderless. The child's life is rooted in the mother. As one grows one has to find new grounds for one's roots, and the parents must help one in this regard. A seedling is first reared in a pot and then it is transplanted on the ground. There it grows by itself into a huge tree.

Need for identity • It is necessary to retain the uniqueness of our personality, not trying to become somebody else by blindly imitating others. In this regard we must have the courage to be alone not only physically but also intellectually, ideologically, and emotionally. Many act like a mirror reflecting different personalities. Identifying oneself as a spiritual aspirant one has to shape one's personality accordingly, reflecting the ideal in everything one does. Most of the people behave differently in different situations. In temples they are devotees, in their own homes they are like demons, and in business they indulge in cut-throat competitions demanding their 'pound of flesh'. With some they remain like slaves and try to enslave some others. In this manner, their personality changes according to the situation.

Need for orientation • We need to also observe the world and its happenings with some definite perspective, and bring everything within the framework of that perspective. Otherwise everything remains unrelated and confusing. The scientist looks at the Himalayas in a scientific perspective, the artist looks at it through the aesthetic sense, and for a yogi it is as an abode of spirituality.

(To be continued)



Erich Fromm (1900–1980)

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Theory and Knowledge in the Indian Tradition in the Light of Swami Vivekananda

Kapil Kumar Bhattacharyya

Introduction

The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them. The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. ... Here it may be said that these laws as laws may be without end, but they must have had a beginning.¹

AN UNDERSTANDING OF ANY CONCEPT must begin from theorising and be validated through proper conceptualisation, understanding, and acceptance of the same. When such concepts pass the test of generalisation, what we have before us are known as laws. These laws are what comprise the subject of human knowledge and our ancient scriptures have an abundance of them. And, while it is hard to precisely determine the earliest attempts of

theorising in India, the antiquity of the same remains beyond doubt as is evident from the Vedas, which deal in considerable detail on the laws of nature.² Thus, we have to concede that the concept of theorising is nothing new in the Indian perspective.

Not much is yet known about the research traditions developed in ancient Indian universities such as Taxila and Nalanda. However, generalisations offered in a huge number of treatises of ancient India on different subjects could not possibly have been shaped without elaborate research processes. These need to be explored further.³ The present work is a humble endeavour to understand the concepts of 'theory' and 'knowledge' in the Indian tradition, stringing together the various thoughts of the great monk of India, Swami Vivekananda, on the subject of 'theory', 'knowledge', and 'practical application' of the same.

The Vedic Mind

The minds of the people from whom the Vedas came were intent upon following principles, discovering principles. They had no time to work upon details or to wait for them; they wanted to go deep into the heart of things. Something beyond was calling them, as it were, and they could not wait. Scattered through the Upanishads, we find that the details of subjects which we now call modern sciences are often very erroneous,

but, at the same time, their principles are correct. For instance, the idea of ether, which is one of the latest theories of modern science, is to be found in our ancient literature in forms much more developed than is the modern scientific theory of ether today, but it was in principle. When they tried to demonstrate the workings of that principle, they made many mistakes. ... Coming to the principles, we find these Vedic thinkers very courageous and wonderfully bold in propounding large and generalised theories. Their solution of the mystery of the universe, from the external world, was as satisfactory as it could be. The detailed workings of modern science do not bring the question one step nearer to solution, because the principles have failed. ... What I mean is that in their inquiry into the principle, the Hindu thinkers were as bold, and in some cases, much bolder than the moderns. They made some of the grandest generalizations that have yet been reached, and some still remain as theories, which modern science has yet to get even as theories.⁴

The Aryan mind had so long been seeking an answer to the question [of the beginning of life on earth] from outside. They questioned everything they could find, the sun, the moon, and stars, and they found all they could in this way. The whole of nature at best could teach them only of a personal Being who is the Ruler of the universe; it could teach nothing further. In short, out of the external world we can only get the idea of an architect, that which is called the Design Theory. ... That much they had found out already, and many other minds would have rested at that. In other countries the same thing happened; the human mind could not rest there; the thinking, grasping minds wanted to go further, but those that were backward got hold of them and did not allow them to grow. But fortunately these Hindu sages were not the people to be knocked on the head; they wanted to get a solution, and now we find that they were leaving the external for the internal. The first thing that struck them was, that it is

not with the eyes and the senses that we perceive that external world, and know anything about religion; the first idea, therefore, was to find the deficiency, and that deficiency was both physical and moral, as we shall see. You do not know, says one of these sages, the cause of this universe; there has arisen a tremendous difference between you and me—why? Because you have been talking sense things and are satisfied with sense-objects and with the mere ceremonials of religion, while I have known the Purusha beyond (1.353–4).

People seem to forget that about ninety per cent of all our knowledge cannot, in the very nature of things, be applied in a practical way to add to our material happiness or to lessen our misery. Only the smallest fraction of our scientific knowledge can have any such practical application to our daily lives. This is so because only an infinitely small percentage of our conscious mind is on the sensuous plane. We have just a little bit of sensuous consciousness and imagine that to be our entire mind and life; but, as a matter of fact, it is but a drop in the mighty ocean of subconscious mind. If all there is of us were a bundle of sense perceptions, all the knowledge we could gain could be utilised in the gratification of our sense-pleasures. But fortunately such is not the case. As we get further and further away from the animal state, our sense-pleasures become less and less; and our enjoyment, in a rapidly increasing consciousness of scientific and psychological knowledge, becomes more and more intense; and 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge', regardless of the amount of sense pleasures it may conduce to, becomes the supreme pleasure of the mind (6.28).

Theory and Knowledge

All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is simply the suggestion, the occasion, which sets you to study your own mind, but the object of your study is always your own mind.

The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton, and he studied his own mind. He rearranged all the previous links of thought in his mind and discovered a new link among them, which we call the law of gravitation. It was not in the apple nor in anything in the centre of the earth. All knowledge, therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say, 'We are learning', and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the more knowing man, the man upon whom it lies thick is ignorant, and the man from whom it has entirely gone is all-knowing, omniscient (1.28).

The mind attains to powers of finer perception which no instrument will ever be able to attain. To attain to this power of superfine perception we have to begin from the gross. And as the power becomes finer and finer, we go deeper and deeper inside our own nature; and all the gross movements will first be tangible to us, and then the finer movements of the thought; we will be able to trace the thought before its beginning, trace it where it goes and where it ends. For instance, in the ordinary mind a thought arises. The mind does not know how it began or whence it comes. The mind is like the ocean in which a wave rises, but although the man sees the wave, he does not know how the wave came there, whence its birth, or whither it melts down again; he cannot trace it any further. But when the perception becomes finer, we can trace this wave long, long before it comes to the surface; and we will be able to trace it for a long distance after it has disappeared, and then we can understand psychology as it truly is (8.193-4).

Here we stand, and our eyes look forward sometimes miles ahead. Man has been doing that since he began to think. He is always looking forward, looking ahead. He wants to know where he goes even after the dissolution of his

body. Various theories have been propounded, system after system has been brought forward to suggest explanations. Some have been rejected, while others have been accepted, and thus it will go on, so long as man is here, so long as man thinks (2.263).

Nowadays men think this or that and write many volumes, which are entirely misleading, because they have not the power to analyse their own minds and are talking of things they have never *known*, but only theorised about. All science must be based on facts, and these facts must be observed and generalised. Until you have some facts to generalise upon, what are you going to do? So all these attempts at generalising are based upon knowing the things we generalise. A man proposes a theory, and adds theory to theory, until the whole book is patchwork of theories, not one of them with the least meaning (8.194).

In acquiring knowledge we make use of generalisations, and generalisation is based upon observation. We first observe facts, then generalise, and then draw conclusions or principles. The knowledge of the mind, of the internal nature of man, of thought, can never be had until we have first the power of observing the facts that are going on within. It is comparatively easy to observe facts in the external world, for many instruments have been invented for the purpose, but in the internal world we have no instrument to help us. Yet we know we must observe in order to have a real science. Without a proper analysis, any science will be hopeless—mere theorising. And that is why all the psychologists have been quarrelling among themselves since the beginning of time, except those few who found out the means of observation (1.129).

Knowledge and Practical Application

For practical purposes, let us talk in the language of modern science. But I must ask you to bear in mind that, as there is religious superstition, so also there is a superstition in the matter

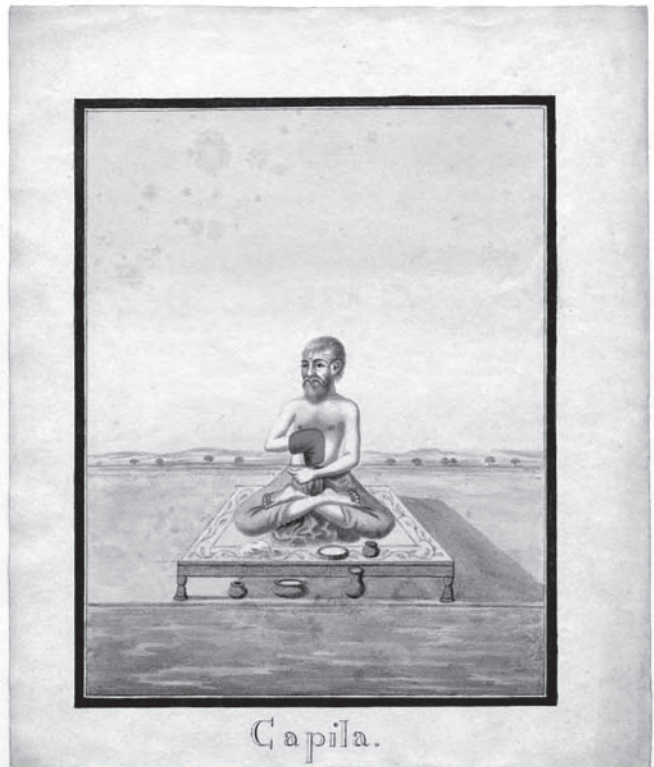
of science. There are priests who take up religious work as their speciality; so also there are priests of physical law, scientists. As soon as a great scientist's name, like Darwin or Huxley, is cited, we follow blindly. It is the fashion of the day. Ninety-nine per cent of what we call scientific knowledge is mere theories. And many of them are no better than the old superstitions of ghosts with many heads and hands, but with this difference that the latter differentiated man a little from stocks and stones. True science asks us to be cautious. Just as we should be careful with the priests, so we should be with the scientists. Begin with disbelief. Analyse, test, prove everything, and then take it. Some of the most current beliefs of modern science have not been proved. Even in such a science as mathematics, the vast majority of its theories are only working hypotheses. With the advent of greater knowledge they will be thrown away (2.28–9).

It is man-making theories that we want (3.224). That theory ought to be taken which explains most of the facts, if not all, and that without contradicting other existing theories (2.76). Any theory which can fit itself to facts which it wants to explain, by first cutting as many of them as prevents its fitting itself into them, is on the face of it wrong (4.383). It is much better to confess ignorance than to try to evade the question by the allurements of future enjoyments in proportion to the evil here, or by posing 'mysteries.' Not only undeserved suffering forced upon us by any agent is immoral—not to say unjust—but even the future-making up theory has no legs to stand upon (4.269).

But theory and idea is one thing and actual working is another thing (3.534). Mere believing in certain theories and doctrines will not help you much. The mighty word that came out from the sky of spirituality in India was Anubhuti, realisation, and ours are the only

books which declare again and again: 'The Lord is to be *seen*'. Bold, brave words indeed, but true to their very core; every sound, every vibration is true (3.377–8). Verification is the perfect proof of a theory (1.9). Any amount of theoretical knowledge one may have; but unless one does the thing actually, nothing is learnt (8.456).

Theory is very good indeed, but how are we to carry it into practice? If it be absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics (2.291). Practice is absolutely necessary. You may sit down and listen to me by the hour every day, but if you do not practise, you will not get one step further. It all depends on practice. We never understand these things until we experience them. We will have to see and feel them for ourselves. Simply listening to explanations and theories will not do (1.139).



In this regard, Swamiji's observation on Sri Ramakrishna's approach is worth recalling:

Whenever he wanted to do anything he never confined himself to fine theories, but would enter into the practice immediately; We see many persons talking the most wonderfully fine things about charity and about equality and the rights of other people and all that, but it is only in theory. I was so fortunate as to find one who was able to carry theory into practice. He had the most wonderful faculty of carrying everything into practice which he thought was right (4.174).

The Right Approach to Knowledge

It is evident from the assertions so far that Swamiji emphasised a good combination of theory and practice and not mere conjectures and guesses. Lam-duck theories that are limited only to academic relish are no good. Equally worthless are theories that cannot find application and utility in the cause of the furtherance of human welfare both in the physical world and beyond. That research in ancient India was seen as an act of knowledge-enhancement, which was expected to contribute to the betterment of humanity has already been established.

The text *Sankhya Karika* of Ishvara Krishna begins thus: '*Duhkhatrayabhigatat jijnasa tadapaghatake hetau; Drishte sapartha chet naikantatyantato'bhavat.*' Loosely translated to English,⁵ it means: 'In this world, three kinds of miseries exist. Since these miseries exist, they need to be addressed. From this need, there arises a desire for initiating an inquiry into the means of solving them. Such an inquiry is superfluous if visible means of solution already exist. However, if the means are not absolute and the miseries remain unsolved, the inquiry certainly warrants validity.'

All our knowledge is based upon experience. What we call inferential knowledge, in which we go from the less to the more general, or from the general to the particular, has experience as its basis. In what are called the exact sciences, people easily find the truth, because it appeals to the particular experiences of every human being. The scientist does not tell you to believe in anything, but he has certain results which come from his own experiences, and reasoning on them when he asks us to believe in his conclusions, he appeals to some universal experience of humanity. In every exact science there is a basis which is common to all humanity, so that we can at once see the truth or the fallacy of the conclusions drawn therefrom.⁶

The quest of any knowledge essentially begins from the plane of disbelief regarding any idea. It may be an assertion, an observation, a prior phenomenon, or even a law. The disbelief may give rise to a new idea or a new dimension to the existing idea which has to be processed further. The idea then has to be analysed from multiple angles and accordingly different suppositions are likely to come up. These suppositions will then have to be put to the test of practicability through verifiable methods so as to assess their validity. The validity, however, needs to be in totality and not selective in nature. Only when the idea has been put to test in every possible manner and its validity established in its entirety beyond doubt, the idea needs to be accepted. However, mere acceptance of an idea is not good enough. The idea must be put to proper application for the welfare of the world.

Thus, we find that knowledge flows from 'disbelief' to 'realisation and acceptance' and ultimately 'application'. As Swamiji used to say: 'Do not believe a thing because you read it in a book! Do not believe a thing because another has said it is so! Find out the truth for yourself! That is

realization!⁷ Now that we have seen the right approach to knowledge, we also need to realise the means to attaining knowledge.

How To Attain Knowledge

It is true that all knowledge is within ourselves, but this has to be called forth by another knowledge. Although the capacity to know is inside us, it must be called out, and that calling out of knowledge can only be done, a Yogi maintains, through another knowledge. Dead, insentient matter never calls out knowledge, it is the action of knowledge that brings out knowledge. Knowing beings must be with us to call forth what is in us, so these teachers were always necessary. The world was never without them, and no knowledge can come without them (1.216–7).

We talk of principles, we think of theories, and that is all right; but every thought and every movement, every one of our actions, shows that we can only understand the principle when it comes to us through a person. We can grasp an idea only when it comes to us through a materialised ideal person. We can understand the precept only through the example (4.121). It is true, as the modern philosophers say, that there is something in man which evolves out of him; all knowledge is in man, but certain environments are necessary to call it out. We cannot find any knowledge without teachers (1.217).

It is worth mentioning here that though Swamiji was fortunate to have received knowledge from Sri Ramakrishna, he did not accept his master's words on face value. When Swamiji first met Sri Ramakrishna, he had many reservations regarding the latter's views. He then listened to what his master had to say, deeply contemplated on the assertions, and only when he was firmly convinced, accepted his master's ideas. Thus, we find that Swamiji himself practised the approach to knowledge asserted by him.


Keeping in mind the tenets of research and knowledge in the Indian tradition and drawing on insights from the assertions of Swamiji put forth so far, we may broadly map the right approach to knowledge as may be envisaged from the rich legacy of the Indian antiquity in the following order: Finding the ideal person or the right teacher, beginning with disbelief regarding an idea, analysing the idea adequately, testing the idea practically, proving everything regarding the idea, accepting the idea wholeheartedly, and putting the idea into application for the welfare of the world.

This, then, is the broad framework which has ably facilitated the smooth transfer of knowledge in the Indian tradition. A student goes to the ideal person with some abstract idea often initiated by a sense of inquisitiveness accompanied by the inability to comprehend the truth. The teacher takes the student through the right path of knowledge accomplishment guided by the sense of love and responsibility towards both the student and humanity at large. Once the student understands the truth and firmly accepts the idea from one's heart, the student carries forward the baton of knowledge and passes the same to the subsequent generations in the true spirit of knowledge utility for human welfare. This very view has been emphasised by Vachaspati Mishra in his *Sankhya Tattva Kaumudi*, where he gives us a list of five siddhis: *Tara*, *sutara*, *taratara*, *ramyaka*, and *sadamudita*, which are mandatory for the realisation of any research work aimed at the welfare of human beings.⁸

Concluding Remarks

It is no secret that Swamiji was an extremely well-read man. Just as he knew the ancient Indian scriptures like the back of his hand, he was equally well-acquainted with the modern sciences. More importantly, he could connect the

knowledge of ancient India with the latest discoveries of science, a quality which has been, by and large, missing in the present age. The present work has been a modest attempt to understand the secret of the desired knowledge transfer in the Indian tradition and shed some light on the concepts of 'theory' and 'knowledge' from the Indian perspective.

This work is essentially inspired by the thoughts of Swamiji on 'theory', 'knowledge', and 'practical application' which the present author feels are adequate to render an understanding of the concepts in question on their own. Hence, the author has deliberately stayed shy of inserting his views unless absolutely necessary. The present work, thus, is not original in the strictest sense of the term. But then, no attempt has been made to project the same as one. The author's only aim has been to string together Swamiji's views on the concerned subject from different sources in a logical order and outline the broad framework connecting the concerned links in the Indian tradition and whether the author has been able to do some justice to the same remains to be seen. 

Notes and References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.7.
2. Dr Nirmala Mani Adhikary in a paper, has traced back the concept of theory and theorisation to the *Charaka Samhita* from Indian antiquity, thereby, disproving the prevalent notion of 'theory' being a Western construct. For a detailed understanding of the concept of theory and theorisation given in the *Charaka Samhita*, see Dr Nirmala Mani Adhikary, 'Theory Building Through Research: An Exposition From A Classical Sanskrit Text', *China Media Research*, 9/3 (July 2013), 28-32.
3. Kapil Kumar Bhattacharyya and Biplab Lohochoudhury, 'Tracing the Roots of Research from Indian Perspective', *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 23/1 (2014), 102-16 <https://archive.org/details/TracingTheRootsOfResearchFromIndianPerspective_2014> accessed 23 December 2015.
4. *Complete Works*, 2.89-90.
5. More accurate translations are: 'Duhkhatrayābhghātāt, From the torment by the three-fold (causes of) pain (there arises); jijnāṣā, a desire for inquiry; tadapaghātake hetau, into the means of terminating it; Drste, (there existing) visible means; sā, it (i.e., the inquiry); apārthā, superfluous; cet, if it be said; na, (we reply) not so; ekānta-atyantatah-abhāvāt, (since in them) there is the absence of certainty and permanency.' (*Sāṃkhya Kārika of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa with the Tattva Kaumudī of Śrī Vācaspati Miśra*, trans. Swami Virupakshananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1995), 1-2). A part of the *Sāṃkhya Tattva Kaumudī of Vāchaspati Miśra*, a commentary on this Karika, is translated thus: 'The three kinds of pain constitute (what is ordinarily called) the "triad of pain". And these are: (1) The naturo-intrinsic (*Ādhyātmika*), (2) The naturo-extrinsic (*Ādhibhautika*), and (3) The super-natural (*Adhidaivika*). Of these the naturo-intrinsic is two-fold, *bodily* and *mental*. *Bodily* pain is caused by the disorder of the various humours, wind, bile, and phlegm; and *mental* pain is due to desire, wrath, avarice, affection, fear, envy, grief, and the non-perception of particular objects. All these are called *intrinsic* on account of their admitting of internal remedies. Pains submitting to external remedies are two-fold: *extrinsic*, and *super-human*. The *extrinsic* are caused by men, beasts, birds, reptiles and inanimate things; and the *superhuman* ones owe their existence to the evil influence of planets and the various class of elementals.' (Gangānātha Jhā, *An English Translation, with the Sanskrit Text of the Tattva-Kaumudī (Sāṃkhya) of Vāchaspati Miśra* (Bombay: Theosophical, 1896), 2).
6. *Complete Works*, 1.126.
7. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 1.31.
8. See *Tattva-Kaumudī (Sāṃkhya) of Vāchaspati Miśra*, 95.

Swami Premananda's Teachings

Swami Omkareshwarananda

TODAY IS KRISHNA NAVAMI, Wednesday, 15 Agrahayan, the star is Uttara-Phalguni, and the date is 1 December 1915. Just a few moments ago the sun has set, withdrawing its net. The evening vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna has begun at Belur Math. 'Become god and worship god'—the worshipper is god himself, ever-perfect, Ishvarakoti, one of the inner-circle of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples, and the embodiment of sacrifice, love, and bliss: Swami Premananda. His body shines gloriously like that of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He is wearing an ochre dhoti and has an ochre wrapper over his upper body. He is holding a bell in his left hand, a lighted five-faced lamp in his right hand, and his mind is indrawn. The devotees are fulfilling the purpose of their eyes and lives, seeing the vesper service of this godman, standing in the corridor with folded hands in front of Sri Ramakrishna's shrine.

The vespers have ended. Now, there will be the singing of hymns. The brahmacharis and devotees of Belur Math are seated in their allotted seats. Swami Premananda too has sat facing north on the seat reserved for him in the corridor in front of Sri Ramakrishna's shrine. Now began the group singing of the song '*Khandana bhava-bandhana, jaga-vandana vandi tomay*; we salute Thee! Lord! Adored of the world, Samsara's bondage breaker', composed by Swami Vivekananda. This was followed by the singing of the hymn, '*Om hrīm ritam gunajit gunedyah*; Om! Hrim! Thou art the True, the Imperturbable



Swami Premananda (1861–1918)

One'. After that everyone saluted Sri Ramakrishna by prostrating on the ground, saying: '*Om sthapakaya cha dharmasya sarvadharmasvarupine avataravarishtaya ramakrishnaya te namah, Om namo bhagavate Sri Ramakrishnaya namo namah*'; I bow down to Ramakrishna, who established the religion, embodying in himself the reality of all religions and being thus the foremost of divine incarnations, Om I bow down to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.'

The Importance of Experience

*Anubhutam vina mudha
vritha brahmani modate
Pratibimbata-shakhagra-
phalasvadana modavat.*

In vain does the fool take delight in Brahman, without experience, just like one takes delight in the eating of a fruit in the reflection of a tree's branch seen in one's front.¹

Malaria is rampant during the months of August

to November. The number of monks staying in Belur Math used to reduce during this period. During the winter, monks from various places used to come to Belur Math. Swami Girijananda, Swami Shyamananda, Brahmachaitanya, Swami Achyutananda, and some other monks of the Belur Math had returned one after another after performing spiritual austerities in places like Uttarkashi, Lakshmanjhula, and Rishikesh.

It was around seven to eight p.m. in the evening. Many monks and brahmacharis of the Math were assembled in the visitors' room after the singing of hymns and after doing japa and meditation. Revered Baburam Maharaj [Swami Premananda] used to encourage those present, sometimes to sing bhajans, sometimes to read from books, and sometimes he used to hold everyone spellbound by his nectarine words.

Swami Premananda told to the monks who had returned from Rishikesh: 'All of you have become like the monks of Rishikesh! They say: "The world does not exist in the past, present, and the future." Everyone wears ochre robes of different hues and wanders about begging alms and learns by rote some verses of the Bhagavad-gita or Vedanta to dupe the householders. Can one become a monk just by doing these? All of that will not work here. This is the kingdom of Sri Ramakrishna! One has to make him one's ideal and strive for increasing one's renunciation, dispassion, love, devotion, and faith. One has to mould one's life through all these qualities; only then can one attain fulfilment in life. Instead, if one just wears an ochre robe and rattles off verses like a sadhu of Rishikesh, can that make one a monk? It would not do if one just parrots verses. It should be reflected in one's life; life burning with renunciation! One has to show it through one's life. Instead, just wearing the ochre cloth and memorising verses—chhi-chhi!'

Renunciation

Tyagenaike amritattvamanashub.

By renunciation alone can one attain immortality.²

'Today some devotees had come. They were repeatedly saying: "Our guru has asked to read the Gita often." I asked them: "What good would come of mere reading?" One has to become what has been told in the Gita. One has to show it through one's life. Nothing will happen if that is not done. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "The meaning of Gita is what comes by repeating the word 'Gita' ten times." That is, if you say "Gita, Gita, Gita"—it becomes "*tyagi, tyagi, tyagi*". If one does not become a *tyagi*, renunciate, nothing will happen. Renunciation alone is the main mantra. And renunciation alone can lead to peace. There is no other path.

'Let all of you become the Gita! That is, become renunciates, not just from the outside, but from the depths of your mind. Of what avail is it if you do not become a renunciate and just memorise the Gita? Nowadays, the Gita is there in every home and many have read it. Yet, why is it that they are not getting God-realisation? How would they get it? Their minds are attached to sense-objects, to lust and greed. How can one attain God-realisation then? It is just a waste of energy to oar a boat that is anchored in lust and greed. If you wish to cross the ocean of samsara; if you wish to put an end to all suffering, cut off all mental attachments, mental knots.'

Saying this, Swami Premananda sang in his usual melodious voice:

Tara's boat has come into bay.
O Mind, come running,
if you wish to go to the shore.
Oar fast and move on,
hoisting the sail in Tara's name.
If you reach the shore, all sufferings will go,
you will cut all the knots of the mind.

O Mind, you shop in the bazaar,
why do you run around in vain?
The day of samsara is past,
evening has come,
what more will you do in samsara's market?
Says Sri Ramprasad, tighten your chest belts,
Now, I run cutting the bonds of maya.

After a while Baburam Maharaj said: 'Renunciation is needed, austerity is needed, detachment is needed—only then can one understand the import of the Gita. Renunciation, renunciation, renunciation. Just see Sri Ramakrishna, what a great renunciate he was! He could not touch money; his hands would get twisted. Why don't you mould your lives keeping him as the ideal? To mould one's life according to an ideal is dharma. If you do not do this—it is immaterial whether you are a householder or a monk—your life would go waste. You would only go round and round in samsara. Do you understand?

Saying this, he started singing in that mood:
Mother, how long will you wheel me around?
Like the blind ox of the oil-machine.

Having tied me to samsara's tree,
you are going in endless rounds.
For what fault of mine
have you made me a slave of six oxes?
The word 'Mother' brims with love,
you take to your lap the crying child.
I see this is the universe's norm,
then am I alone, not of this universe?
Repeating Durga's name,
countless have sinners been saved.
For once open the blinds on your eyes,
I seek refuge in your feet.
There are many bad sons,
but never a bad mother.
This is the hope of Ramprasad,
Till the end, I bow to thee, Mother.

Last 21 November, Saturday, Baburam Maharaj was invited to speak at a meeting of the Calcutta Vivekananda Society. He refused at first.

But, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and a member of the Society, Kalipada Babu came to the Math, and repeatedly requested Maharaj, and accompanied him to the meeting place. Kalipada Babu is the son of the renowned Gangadhar Bandyopadhyay and the grandson of the great Sri Shambhuchandra. Baburam Maharaj went to Calcutta that day and spoke at that meeting; he is recounting it today.

Baburam Maharaj: 'Just see, I was not at all interested to go that Saturday; I went because of being requested persistently. A pandit gave a wonderful lecture. His language was good and he is a great scholar, but what of it? I intently observed that his words did not penetrate the audience, they were not impressed. But, [pointing to himself] I am not a scholar. Sri Ramakrishna made me speak something. All listened to it with rapt attention and eagerness. I told: "Nothing comes out of lecturing, you have to show it through your life, only then will you get permanent results, can't you see?"'

'Purity is Religion'—Jesus Christ

'One has to be pure, purity alone is religion. One has to align one's speech and actions. I saw Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of purity. One person used to accept bribes and thus have some additional income. This person once touched Sri Ramakrishna's feet when he was in samadhi. Upon this Sri Ramakrishna cried out aloud in pain.

'When he was in samadhi, one had to hold Sri Ramakrishna to prevent him from falling down. We also used to fear lest he cry out in pain at our touch. There was a divine love among us brother-disciples. People used to say: "We have never seen such love among brother-disciples before. Usually, brother-disciples are after one another's lives. This is a unique thing that we see." Develop that kind of divine love among you. When we would be no more, even if you build hospitals

in every city, give lectures on Vedanta, start ashramas—nothing would come out of it unless there is purity, deep love, and amity among you.

‘Maintain deep love and affection among yourselves. Do you consider yourselves any less? Are the disciples of Sri Sarada Devi any less than those of Sri Ramakrishna? I am not exaggerating but telling the truth. Sri Ramakrishna’s mood was visible externally as bhava, mahabhava, and samadhi. On the other hand, Sri Sarada Devi is the embodiment of Divine Mother, but is keeping her real form hidden and is doing household chores like cooking just like any ordinary woman. [To Matilal, later Swami Mahadevananda] You are coming from Jayrambati today; how is she?’

‘I heard a talk on *rasalila* in Kashi. I liked it very much the first day: a good speaker, a good singer, there was some scholarship. I heard the same talk on the second and third day too. The audience was full of tainted householders attached to lust and greed. If I could see them again, I would give them a piece of my mind. Just see, how would these impure householders understand the import of *rasalila*? Only those who are completely pure are qualified to hear all that. If an impure person hears it, it would bring that person ill luck. And that talk was being given to just those who are not qualified to hear it: householders attached to lust and greed. Chhi-chhi!’

‘Do you think Sri Krishna did nothing in his life but dance tap-tap with *gopis*, flute in his hand? Is this your ideal?’

‘People of your nation are starving, have nothing to wear, have no physical strength, no brahmacharya, and have been weakened by diseases, and to top it all, there is no stopping them from producing children, year after year. Instead of telling them about *rasalila*, you have to preach the great message of Sri Krishna, the chariot-*eer* of Partha, who propounded the path of selfless work. “*Klaibyam masma gamah partha*; O

Partha, do not yield to impotence.”³ “Give up impotence!” “Be human and enjoy this earth.” You have to also preach to people, the ideal life of Hanuman.

‘If one is a devotee, has one to just meditate upon the form of Sri Krishna with flute in his hand and see his dance? Ah! What is this? Sri Ramakrishna never liked a straitjacketed approach—he used to talk of the devotion of a robber. Do you know that story that Sri Ramakrishna used to tell?

‘There was a great Vaishnava who lived eating the leaves and fruits that had fallen from the tree, and used to spend his time repeating the name of and contemplating on God. But he carried a sharpened sword on his hip. One day, seeing this non-violent great Vaishnava carry a sharpened sword on his hip, Sage Narada asked him: “Sir, I see that you are a great Vaishnava; you spare even the leaves on the tree, lest you harm any living being. You sustain yourself by eating the leaves and fruits that have fallen from the tree. Yet, why do you have on your hip, a sword, the very symbol of violence?” The Vaishnava replied: “I carry the sword for killing Arjuna, Pahlada, and Draupadi.” Surprised, Sage Narada asked: “These three are great devotees. Why would you kill them?” The Vaishnava replied: “What! Arjuna has so much courage that he made the lord of the universe his charioteer! And for protecting his life, Pahlada made the lord, having a tender and soft body, come out of a rock pillar! And Draupadi, took refuge in Sri Krishna for protecting her grace, while the lord was taking food and deprived him of his meal! That is why I will kill these three people!”’

(To be continued)

References

1. *Maitreyi Upanishad*, 2.22.
2. *Kaivalya Upanishad*, 1.3.
3. *Gita*, 2.3.

Of Films, Fantasy, and Faith

Pritha Lal

Cinema: Thoughts Behind A Silver Screen

FOR THE LONGEST TIME, across countries, cultures, and communities, cinema has been a very potent means of communication of thoughts and ideas. Of course for many Indians, the word 'cinema' almost instinctively conjures up stereotypical images of Bollywood, which may or may not appeal to the sensibilities of many readers of this journal. In making that statement, I do not mean to demean or discount the role the Indian film industry plays in the portrayal of India across the globe, but just state an assumed preference and also set the expectations of this article at the very outset.

The world of cinema has been a very interesting one as far as religion and spirituality are concerned. Most Indian films, no matter what the language they are made in, typically show a scene or two where there is a shrine of some faith where the devout offer prayers. One can go further and say that there are films that have been made across the continents that have talked of the lives of gods and their renowned devotees. There have been television serials on Sri Krishna and movies on Meerabai. There have been films on Christ and various elements of Christianity, in English and many other languages. Islam and its misconceptions and perceptions have often been dealt with very sensitively in some well-known movies that have come out of Bollywood and have made us pause and think. The world renowned film-maker Martin Scorsese aptly says: 'Cinema is a matter of what's in the frame and what's out.'¹

Faith is definitely in the frame, so to speak. But what I find more interesting is the evolution of thought across the globe that causes us to look at faith and its tenets in very diametrically opposite contexts of the silver screen. And maybe in some trite terms, find some profound truths in a movie hall amidst popcorn and soft drinks.

Of all the movies related directly or indirectly to the concepts of Hindu faith and culture, I was particularly amazed by a series of books that I read by an author recently and then watched the movies made on the same by Hollywood. The universality of the ancient tenets of Hinduism have never been so starkly clear to me as they were through this most unexpected and unlikely of media. My attempt in this article is to take you down that path I traversed as I relearned some concepts of the Hindu *varnashrama* that my history books taught eons ago, in the light of the present world.

A Quick Lesson in History

'Wisdom, itself, is often an abstraction associated not with fact or reality but with the man who asserts it and the manner of its assertion.'² This wonderful quote by the famous economist John Kenneth Galbraith is probably at the crux of what I would like to share with you in this article. Gathering data to create information, followed by generation of knowledge, that enables one to assimilate wisdom, is the typical sequence with which the human brain processes various elements of its environment, and makes it a part and parcel of its being. This then reflects

in human behaviour and distinct patterns find their way into our books on history, sociology, and other relevant arts and sciences.

Ancient Indian texts, historical treatises, and other evidence of social anthropology talk categorically about the concept of the Hindu *varnashrama* or the categorisation of society based on *varnas* or 'divisions' in conjunction with the four ashramas or stages of life. As a quick recap the four *varnas* are: brahmanas—priests, teachers, and intellectuals; Kshatriyas—police, army, and administration; Vaishyas—farmers, merchants, and business people; and Shudras—artisans and workers. The four ashramas are: brahmacharya, student; Grihastha, householder; Vanaprastha, retirement; and sannyasa, renunciation.

The Future of an Ancient Thought

After that quick history lesson let us now fast forward from the Vedic age spanning (1750–500 BCE) to 2011. Veronica Roth, a twenty-six year old American novelist and short story writer, published the *Divergent Trilogy* that is now being made into movies. The books have been on the New York Times bestselling lists and the movies are running just as successfully. For those unfamiliar with the books, reading my introduction to this article is going to seem extremely disjointed, but I ask for your patience as I attempt to explain a bit more.

Without giving away the climax of the books or the movies, the storyline of *Divergent* has the most interesting analogy to the *varnashrama* concepts I referred to earlier. The novel is set in a post-apocalyptic futuristic Chicago, where the world has limited inhabitants, and the social order has taken on a much regulated, regimented form and form. There are five 'factions' that are based on the innate dispositions of the inhabitants and are categorised thus:

1. *Amity, the peaceful*: This faction is

characterised by individuals, who dislike strife and discord of any kind and believe in contributing to the society by farming and growing crops, and value peace, above all else. 2. *Abnegation, the selfless*: They believe selflessness to be the pinnacle of all virtues and the ultimate means of attaining peace in society. This trait makes this faction ideal for the role of administrators and political leaders of this futuristic world. 3. *Candour, the honest*: This faction is formed by those who believe that dishonesty is the key fault in human nature and the sole cause of war and all evil. They believe in being honest under all circumstances and feel that is what will ultimately bring peace and justice. 4. *Dauntless, the brave*: This faction is formed by those who blame cowardice for society's problems. They value the virtue of bravery over any other, and emphasise the idea of freedom from fear. They are in some sense the 'peacekeepers' in society and protect it by the sheer prowess of physical strength and the mental tenacity to endure pain of all forms. 5. *Erudite, the intelligent*: This faction believes ignorance is the root of all evil and they value intelligence and wisdom over all else. They believe pursuit of knowledge will lead to a far more evolved and progressive society. They are the learners, scientists, doctors, and teachers in this social order.

Individuals are born into factions but at sixteen years of age, they are required to take an aptitude test that describes the faction they are best suited for. Upon receiving the test results, they may choose to remain in the faction of their families or move to a different faction based on their aptitude and preference. A transfer into a new faction involves a rigorous initiation process. Those who are unable to complete this initiation are termed as 'factionless'. They are not allowed to go back to the faction of their birth and remain literally in the



Martin Scorsese (b. 1942)

outskirts of society and survive amidst poverty and depravation on the streets.

It is against this interesting societal backdrop that the main protagonist of this story makes her appearance, the sixteen-year old Beatrice Prior. Born into an Abnegation family, she is at the crossroads about which faction to choose having completed her aptitude test. The only difference in her case is that her results were inconclusive and she is what the social order terms as 'divergent'. Just like the meaning of the word, those with divergent traits show mastery over more than one quality that makes it hard to assign them to a single faction. The rest of the novel deals with Beatrice's choice to join the Dauntless faction, and her story of consequent trials and tribulations. She learns to adhere to norms imposed by society and balance those with her own unique callings in life and motivators that guide her to make her own decisions.

Where Do We Fit?

If we look at our own society today, even the

most Pollyanna among us will agree, there are 'factions'. It is immaterial of what we call them or how we choose to ignore stark naked truths. The world is not without inequalities or the inadequacies in all of us that make the disequilibrium a living reality. One is not in a position to judge these discrepancies but can at best find one's way around them. So when I am in a subway in New York City and a disabled man plays the violin, I listen for a while and move on to my train dropping a few coins on the violin case open in front of him. The reaction is very similar when I visit India and see a begging bowl outside the car window while in a traffic jam on Sarat Bose Road, Kolkata. Sometimes a part of very fast moving little hands come, clean the glass, sometimes a few packets of fragrant incense are thrust through the partially open window; each time there is an exchange, one between two very different 'factions' in our society.

As I was watching the movie and following Beatrice's travails in this futuristic world, her predicament of being 'divergent' rang various bells

in my mind. Haven't we all traversed our own journeys socially, sociologically, and maybe even spiritually to accept that we may be 'divergent' too in our existence? I delve into another film for an example of a real life. Stephen Hawking is not unknown to us. In 2014, the movie *The Theory of Everything* was made based on real life incidents that Dr Hawking has faced in his epic life that has attempted to solve the mysteries of the Universe from the confines of a wheelchair.

If I were to go by the *Divergent* terminology, he would be what one would call an Erudite, of course. But in this movie that won an Oscar for the best actor playing Dr Hawking, we see very different facets to his personality and persona that are not fictional at all. He is a husband, a father, and a friend. He is a citizen of the world. He lives with his physical and emotional frailties that make him a very real human being as opposed to a scientist par excellence and exception. He is 'dauntless' in his courage in facing his physical infirmities, while being in 'abnegation' on many indulgences given those very same reasons. As a friend and father there is a side to him that displays 'amity' and his unfailing 'candour' in challenging the laws of Physics and Mathematics is not unknown to anyone. Stephen Hawking is 'divergent'. So are some of the greatest scholars of our time, some of the weakest in our society, as are the rest of mere mortals like me who dwell happily in mediocrity.

Swamiji and His Divergence

As I kept going back to this book and movie, the one face that kept coming to my mind time and time again as the most exemplary 'divergent' there ever lived was that of Swami Vivekananda's. His life offers stellar examples of all these 'factions' in a way that is so unique, beautiful, and so very inspirational. There is no dearth of instances of his 'erudition'. But what makes me

smile fondly is an example of 'candour' that he demonstrated at an early age where he showed us all to look for truth and assess it for ourselves. This incident is particularly ironic given that I started this article talking about the Indian class system that was later deformed into the much abused caste system.

There used to come to Naren's house many of his father's clients. They would sit together chatting until their turn for consultation came. They were of various castes; there was even a Mohammedan, with whom Naren was particularly friendly, and each was provided with his own hookah. Caste was a mystery to the boy. Why should not a member of one caste eat with a member of another or smoke his hookah? What would happen if one did? Would the roof fall in on him? Would he suddenly die? He decided to see for himself. Boldly he went round the hookahs and took a whiff from each and every one. No, he was not dead! Just then his father entered. 'What are you doing, my boy?' he questioned. 'Oh, father! why, I was trying to see what would happen if I broke caste! Nothing has happened!' The father laughed heartily and with a knowing look on his face walked into his private study.³

Swamiji was fearless. His spirit was 'dauntless' in ways that anthologies could and have been written on him. For me personally, the fact that an unknown 'Hindoo Monk' travelled half way across the world, against tremendous odds and withstood every challenge of every form that presented itself, and delivered his resounding speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 is an example beyond debate. And on that very same note, could there have been a more apt phrase than 'Sisters and brothers of America', to exemplify 'amity' of the highest order? I think not. The 'amity' he extended to thousands of perfect strangers in that auditorium, lives on to this day. It lives as a road sign in

the midst of the busy metropolis of the Windy City that reads 'Honorary Swami Vivekananda Way'. His 'amity' lives in the form of the twenty monks and nuns of the Ramakrishna Order from across the world, who in 2015 attended the Parliament of Religions in Salt Lake City, Utah, a place known for its predominant Mormon faith and culture. Swami Vivekananda was the greatest 'divergent' that ever lived. His spirit of 'abnegation' and selflessness need no introduction or explanation. Arguably, his greatest treatise, *Karma Yoga*, is the shining example that will continue to inspire generations in the path of selfless and resolute action.

What Does It All Mean To Us?

I do believe beyond reasonable doubt that most of us lead ordinary lives that offer us ample opportunities to live in various 'factions'. It is impossible not to. If one tried to isolate oneself to just one, one would lead a very solitary existence. That is fine in itself but somewhere through history, as the Indian class system, merged sadly to become a rigorous caste system; men and women of 'divergent' dispositions took on key roles to set examples to enable us to make the right choices for the right reasons. We so often sit in judgement on the rights and wrongs of society. We play our own roles in keeping each faction alive and moving conveniently from one to another as the situation demands. We are 'divergent', either by choice or by compulsion. There is no struggle. It is effortless to traverse these labels as one goes about making choices and decisions in life, be they personal, professional, or spiritual. Think about it, how far will one have travelled spiritually as an 'erudite' if they were constrained by the absence of a selfless 'mother heart'?

My spiritual guru, the late Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, often used the phrase '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*'; this world is

your family' and once told me: 'Keep India in your heart always.' Today as I think back on those words, in the context of this Hollywood film, I am convinced that I need to be more 'divergent' than I have ever been in the past. I need to move out of the comfort zones that have begun to define me. I need to study more, be fearless about my insecurities, and be more honest in my spiritual pursuits. I need to be a little bit like Beatrice Prior. I need to learn a little more from Swamiji.

Find your 'divergence', for as Sri Ramakrishna showed through his own life, there are so many ways to reach the Almighty as there are so many views. If we believe in Swamiji's philosophy on education being the manifestation of the divinity already in man, then isn't it logical to assume that being 'divergent' may actually take us a step closer to that innate divinity?



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A Poster of Divergent



Svarajya Siddhih of Gangadharendra Sarasvati —Attaining Self-dominion

Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the December 2013 issue)

THE SAUTRANTIKAS BELIEVE THAT the inner perception or knowledge of objects like pot and cloth are brought about by the varied external experiences in the form of the sense perception of these objects and are non-different from the contact of the senses with these objects. If these external objects were absent, a corresponding knowledge of these objects would be impossible and so, we would have to infer that the cause of the knowledge of these objects is the variety of external objects and this is not direct perception. And hence, the existence of the external world is established only by inference. The Vaibhashikas—whose philosophy is also called *bahya-pratyakshavada*, the school of external-direct perception—hold that if the external objects did not exist, there would be no relation with them of the inner organs and there would be no possibility of inferring them. To infer fire from smoke, there should have been a prior experience of the direct perception of fire where there was smoke. Therefore, though absolutely speaking, the sense perceptions are false; on the relative plane, the external world of objects is not established just by inference but also by direct perception. So, for inferring fire from smoke, one cannot do away with the external fire. Hence, to infer the external sense objects their external presence is also a must.

The opinions of these two schools is being

seen as one because the stand of both these schools is one in that they do not give an absolute reality to the external sense-objects. Taking these two schools as one, they are being quashed and uprooted in the following three verses:

बाह्यं भोग्यं प्रजल्पन्क्षणिकमणुचयं भोक्तृ संघातमन्तः
स्कंधानां पंचकञ्चेदुशमिति सुगतः पृच्छ्यतां वेदबाह्यः ।
किन्ते मानान्तरेण प्रमितमिदमुत प्रौढिरेषा त्वदीया
किं वा मोहात्प्रलापः किमथ

जड जगद्विप्रलिप्सा कुबुद्धे ।। १.२२ ।।

*Bahyam bhogyam prajalpan-kshanikam-
anuchayam bhoktri sanghatamantah
Skandhanam panchakanchedrishamiti sugatah
pricchhyatam vedabahyah.
Kinte manantarena pramitamidamuta
praudhiresha tvadiya
Kim va mohatpralapah kimatha jada jagad-
vipralipsa kubuddhe. (1.22)*

We ask the agnostic Buddhists, who denounce the Vedas: ‘O dull and evil-minded ones, you blabber that all the material objects outside the body—produced out of earth and the other elements, form and other perceptions, and eyes and other sense-organs—having only a momentary existence and the atoms of earth and the other elements are the things that are experienced. You call the five *skandhas* in the body, which are momentary like the external objects, the group of experiencers. You have inferred the momentariness of these objects

and *skandhas* through some other means of knowledge like direct perception. Or could it also be said that this imagination of momentariness of objects is the greatness of your intellect? Or is it just your babble caused out of delusion? Or is it to dupe people?

The Buddhists believe that one *hetu*, cause, leads to another cause. One cause produces an effect, which becomes the next cause. So, depending on one cause, *pratita*, another cause is born, *samutpada*. This is called *pratitya-samutpada*. The relation within a group of causes is called *pratyayopanibandha*. Every object has the characteristics of the four elements like the earth leading to the qualities of hardness, softness, heat, and motion. For instance, a seed gives birth to the sprout. The hardness of the sprout is derived from the element earth in the seed. The softness of the seed comes from the element water. The assimilation necessary for the birth of the sprout comes from the element fire. The element air gives the motion necessary for the sprout to come out of the seed. The group of these elements is the group of the experienced.

There are five *skandhas* or aggregates that form the experience of a conscious being with the external objects. The *rupa-skandha* or the form-aggregate is the sense-objects and the sense-organs taken together, that produce the cause for actions. The *viññāna-skandha* or the consciousness-aggregate is the identification of the experience of the sense-objects through the sense-organs with I-consciousness due to the influence of *alaya-viññāna* or the storage-consciousness. The experience of happiness and misery forms the *vedāna-skandha* or the feeling-aggregate. When the experience of the sense-organs gets identified with a particular name or form and gets related thus to a particular sense-organ, like the eye sees a wooden elephant, the ears hear a drum, and the like; it is called *samjñā-skandha* or the perception-aggregate. The *samskāra-skandha* or mental-formations-aggregate

consists of different emotions like attachment, aversion, delusion, righteousness, pride, and self-conceit. The subject of all experience is *alaya-viññāna*, which is self-revealing and of the nature of a changeless knowledge, which is also called *chitta* or Atman. Anything that can be understood by the intellect, anything that can be spoken, and everything other than that which has all three kinds of non-existence—*prag-abhava*, prior non-existence; *pradhvamsa-abhava*, posterior non-existence; and *atyanta-abhava*, absolute non-existence—is all momentary. The dictum, ‘Whatever exists is momentary like the lightning—all that exists,’ establishes the momentariness of everything.

Here the question is: ‘O dull and evil-minded Buddhists, is all this baseless imagination of yours meant to turn away simple spiritual aspirants from the Vedic path or is it for the entertainment of the stupid?’ Here the question is indirect, to show that the ridiculous standpoint does not even warrant a direct confrontation. People with arguments that are completely against the Vedas are not worthy of being directly addressed to. It has been said: ‘One should not honour, even by a greeting, heretics, men who follow forbidden occupations, men who live like cats, rogues, logicians (arguing against the Veda), and those who live like herons.’¹ Utterances that have no proof or base and are made out of delusion should always be looked down upon. That is why this verse is in a derogatory tone. The implication is that the Buddhists here do not understand their own good and yet they denounce others’ viewpoints.

The contention raised against the Buddhists here is: what is the means of knowledge that led them to form their conclusions? It cannot be direct perception since this method of knowledge accepts the reality of the sense-objects but the transient atoms are not permanent in sense-objects. The method of knowledge adopted by the Buddhists cannot be inference also because

inference needs invariable concomitance. However, since both the objects perceived and the senses cannot be attributed anything more than a momentary existence, their invariable concomitance becomes impossible. Similar is the case with other means of knowledge like presumption, and so on, because these are not accepted by the Buddhists. Then by what uncommon, unheard of, thoughtful proof, by what imagined seventh sense-organ has this conclusion been arrived at? Or has such conclusion been made just to prove that one is separate and unique; just to assert one's ego? Is it like saying: 'Though it is against all means of knowledge, since I have independence to think, so I assert my opinion thus'? This is like the blabbering of fools.

Till now the baselessness of the arguments of the Buddhists has been established. Now, the defects in their arguments are being shown.

संघीभावः कथंवा चलनविरहिणां भङ्गुराणामणूनां
संघोऽनन्यः कथंवा विषयपदमियात्कश्च संघं विधत्ते।
स्कंधानां सन्निपातः कथमिव कियतां भोक्तृता काच धारा
कस्य स्तां भोगमोक्षौ वद जड

सफलं केन वा दर्शनं ते ॥ १.२३ ॥

*Sanghibhavaḥ kathamva chalanavirahinam
bhanguranamanunam*

*Sangho'nanyah kathamva vishayapadamiyat
kashcha sangham vidhatte.*

*Skandhanam sannipataḥ kathamiva kiyatam
bhoktrita kacha dhara*

*Kasya stam bhogamokshau vada jada saphalam
kena va darshanam te. (1.23)*

How can the atoms—that are without action because of the impossibility of a cause and have actions that destroy in a moment because they are momentary—come together in a group in the body and the like? How can this body, that is just a group of atoms according to you, be perceived by the senses? And since you do not accept any conscious principle other than this mass of atoms, who would bring about the different combinations

of the elements? How will the grouping of the *skandhas* be done? Which *skandhas* can experience? What is the nature of your *vijnana-dhara*, a continuous flow of momentary discrete units of knowledge connected with the ego? Who would experience and who would get moksha? O stupid, tell me how can your philosophy be successful?

Refuting the Vaisheshikas, we held that actionless atoms cannot form dyads and triads. Here too, how can actionless atoms form a group like the body, as such formation would be causeless. The Buddhists say that even if atoms were permanent, they would be actionless, more so since they are momentary. Further, is this Buddhists' grouping of atoms, different from or similar to grouping of atoms in objects like a pot? If it is different, then it would be an erroneous conclusion against their own stand. And if it is similar, then such coming together would be imperceptible by the senses.

Objection: Individual strands of hair are not seen from a distance but the entire group of hairs is seen, similarly it could be held that the individual atoms cannot be perceived by the senses but the entire group of atoms can be perceived.

Reply: No, that is not a plausible argument. In the case of hairs, the individual strands are also visible from close proximity. An object does not become imperceptible because of defects like improper eyesight or distance. However, the objects in question are held to be naturally imperceptible even as a group, just like one cannot see a group of air molecules. Further, the insentient atoms can come together only under a sentient being just like a bundle of grass or a heap of grains can be created only by a sentient being. Since you do not accept a sentient doer, the coming together of atoms can also be not accepted.

(To be continued)

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TRADITIONAL TALES

The King and the Scholar

THERE LIVED A HIGHLY CAPABLE KING named Sadhakavarman. He ruled his kingdom with the welfare of his subjects as the foremost aim and had his capital at Vivekapuri. The subjects lived in prosperity, without any wants and thus, the fame of the king spread far and wide.

Since his birth into the royal family, Sadhakavarman enjoyed the royal life of a king. After his coronation, he performed wonders and became famous. After living the life of an emperor for many years, he got tired of worldly life.

Since he had ruled righteously, the king's mind had attained great maturity. Having enjoyed worldly pleasures all his life, they had lost their charm and attraction to him and he craved to remain absorbed in the thought of God. His evolved mind had understood that God realisation alone was the true goal of human life. He started reading and contemplating on religious scriptures. They gave a taste of peace to the king, who had till then lived a life of great hustle and bustle.

Once the king was reading the Bhagavata and learned how Shukadeva had expounded the Bhagavata to King Parikshit for seven days and how King Parikshit had attained self-realisation. This account gave an idea to Sadhakavarman and he thought: 'Aha! I did not know that there is such an easy way to attain self-realisation! I too will listen to the exposition of the Bhagavata just as King Parikshit did.'

He called his minister immediately and said to him: 'Please arrange for a well-read scholar who can explain the Bhagavata to me.' Hearing

the eagerness of the king, the minister remembered about a famous scholar. He said: 'O Lord! There is a renowned scholar in Vivekapuri itself. All, even the gods, know about him. He is Brahmasri Raju Sharma, who is an expert in many sciences, master of the Puranas, a great historian, philosopher, and the lion of Vedanta. He knows the Bhagavata like the back of his hand. One could say that there is no one who has studied the Bhagavata so thoroughly. People lose themselves while hearing to his exposition of the Bhagavata. He is the scholar best suited to fulfil your wish. People are unanimous that he is the best exponent of the Bhagavata. People attend his discourses in thousands irrespective of the time and place. This great scholar's expositions attract huge crowds and there is not even an inch of space in the audience. People who attend his discourses bring enormous gifts. Many societies of scholars honour him by granting him titles and awards. He is the most capable scholar in all respects and would be the most appropriate person to carry out your command.'

King Sadhakavarman decided to hear the Bhagavata from this great scholar according to the counsel of his minister. He commanded the minister: 'What you say is absolutely true. Let this scholar teach me the Bhagavata. Arrange to give him from our treasury, remuneration for each day of his teaching, which should be more than what he has received in a day till now.'

The minister carried out the commands of his king. The great scholar Raju Sharma was invited, whose joy knew no bounds on receiving the invitation. He had not imagined even in his



Shukadeva Reciting the Bhagavata Purana

wildest dreams that he would get such an honour. His close friends congratulated him and said to him repeatedly: 'It is no ordinary thing to be the teacher of the king who rules the country.'

The scholar started expounding the Bhagavata to the king in his palace. He put all his scholarship to work and explained all the aspects of the text, citing numerous references from the scriptures. Thus the classes on the Bhagavata went on for two months. The king—who expected that listening to the Bhagavata would lead to self-realisation—realised that no such thing was happening. Hence, he asked the scholar one day: 'Sir, King Parikshit listened to the Bhagavata for just seven days and attained self-realisation. I, on the other hand, am listening to the Bhagavata from you for the last two months and have not yet attained self-realisation. Why is that so?

You have to tell me the reason tomorrow morning, else I will stop all the royal honours you are being given.'

Unable to reply to the king's question, the scholar desolately returned to his house. He had a young daughter named Mahamedha, meaning great intelligence. She had a great intellect, true to her name. Noticing her father's unusually gloomy face after his return from the palace, she asked him: 'Father, why are you worried so much? Did something bad happen in the palace?'

The scholar replied: 'My dear daughter, why are you concerned with the worries of the elders? Let my worries be with me alone. What good would come by your knowing of them? Please take care of your own affairs, dear child.'

But Mahamedha was not the one to give up so easily; she said: 'Just share your worries with

me. Even children have some intelligence, don't they? Even a small piece of wood can become a toothpick; tender roots can penetrate rocks that even an iron axe cannot break. How can we deny the fact that a small thorn can accomplish what a strong and big spear cannot?'

The scholar was indeed aware of his daughter's intelligence. However, he was doubtful of how she could help him. Nonetheless, because of her insistence, he told everything to her. Hearing attentively to all that her father said, Mahamedha said: 'Father! When you go to the palace tomorrow, please take me along with you. I will give the proper reply to the king's question.' Though the scholar thought that his daughter was speaking playfully, he could not brush aside her words.

The next day, Raju Sharma went to the palace with his daughter. The king was anxiously waiting for the scholar's reply. He did not expect in the least that the scholar would bring his daughter or that she would reply to his question. And so, he asked Mahamedha with wonder: 'Dear child, what reply are you going to give me?' 'O great King! I will reply to your question. But before that, I humbly pray to you to kindly act as I say for some time', said Mahamedha. The king agreed to this.

Mahamedha continued: 'O Lord! Here are two pillars. Kindly command your servants to tie me tightly to one pillar. Similarly, ask them to tie your highness to the other pillar.' The royal servants tied Mahamedha and the king to different pillars. Then the girl asked everyone else to leave the room. All others left the room leaving the king and the girl alone, each tied to a pillar.

Now, Mahamedha beseeched the king: 'O King! I am now caught up here, having been tied to this pillar. Kindly free me from this bondage.' Hearing these words, the king said: 'O girl! Have you gone mad? You talk stupid.

I myself am bound to this pillar. You know this very well. How can I, who am in bondage, free you from bondage?'

On this Mahamedha burst into peals of laughter and said: 'O King! You yourself have given the correct answer to your question. Shukadeva, who explained the Bhagavata to King Parikshit, was a great soul who had attained self-realisation. It is no surprise that hearing the Bhagavata from him, King Parikshit attained self-realisation in just seven days. However, my father is still in ignorance and full of worldly attachments. He is in bondage, not yet free from maya. He expounded the Bhagavata to you for getting all the wealth you give him. How can you attain self-realisation, listening to the Bhagavata from him, who taught it to you because of his desire for wealth?

'Mere scriptural knowledge is of no use. Scholars might have great knowledge of the scriptures, but what good will come of just repeating them like parrots? If one has to truly progress in spiritual life, one has to practise the truths spoken of in the scriptures, in one's daily life. Mere scriptural studies will not lead to self-realisation till one has worldly attachments like lust and wealth in one's mind. Such a person cannot attain moksha.

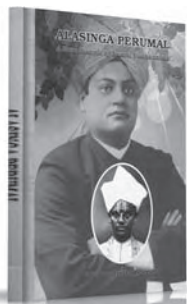
'I repeat. Only a lighted lamp can light another lamp. Similarly, only an illumined person, who is free from bondage, can free another from bondage and help one attain self-realisation.' The girl concluded her words spoken with high respect.

The king understood the truth told by the girl. The royal servants were called and they removed the bonds of the king and Mahamedha. The king left the palace that night and set on a journey to meet a self-realised yogi in the Himalayas and get the knowledge of the ultimate Truth from him.



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Alasinga Perumal: A Rare Disciple of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Tathagatananda

The Vedanta Society of New York,
34, West 71st Street, New York, NYC
100 23. 2015. iii + 136 pp. ₹ 50. PB.

Behind the contributions of every great soul who changed the thought currents of the world, there were some silent and unknown workers who selflessly supported and sacrificed their very breath and life for that work. In the case of Swami Vivekananda, it may be said that Alasinga Perumal was one such worker. In this short yet delightful biography, the author, a senior monk and distinguished author and research scholar, explores the intimate relationship between Swami Vivekananda and Alasinga Perumal, primarily between their first meeting in 1892 and Swamiji's return from the West in 1897.

This book, written as a chronological narrative, comprises fifteen short sections, each four to eight pages long. The author briefly explores Alasinga Perumal's spiritual foundations and family background, patriotic and spiritual tendencies, and a strong yearning to serve his country. The next chapter describes Alasinga's first meetings with Swamiji, Swamiji's possibility of attending the World Parliament of Religions, the hardships Swamiji faced in 1894, and Swamiji's and Alasinga's strong and fearless response to the obstacles. This is followed by separate sections on the Ramabai Circle, the Theosophists, and their attempts to vilify Swamiji, and Swamiji's concern of the Theosophists' influence on Alasinga. The concluding chapters focus mainly on Alasinga's contributions to Swamiji's work, including his organisational skills, his struggles in starting two English journals of the Ramakrishna Order—*Brahmavadin* and *Prabuddha Bharata*—and his impact in spreading Swamiji's philosophy of Practical Vedanta in South India.

This text serves two primary purposes: first, it provides context and background to the letters which Swamiji had written to Alasinga during this five year period, elucidating upon the struggles which Swamiji faced as well as the relatively unknown responses. For example, it is well known that when Swamiji was nearly out of money and starving in the West, he wrote to Alasinga for help. A few days later he wrote: 'I am so sorry that a moment's weakness on my part should cause you so much trouble; I was out of pocket at that time. Since then the Lord has sent me friends' (29). But what neither Swamiji's letters or his biography perhaps explained was Alasinga's swift reaction: 'He borrowed a thousand rupees from a merchant friend and added his small salary of 70 or 80 rupees to that. He requested his wife to part with many of her gold ornaments which she gladly did' (27). Secondly, the text beautifully captures Swamiji's relationship with Alasinga, as that of a guru towards his disciple and a father towards his son. As one goes through the text, one cannot help but feel that Swamiji is not only addressing Alasinga, but the Indian youth for eternity.

The author has concisely presented in an entertaining narrative, the close relationship between Swamiji and Alasinga Perumal. This is a wonderful book, and it is hoped that the Indian youth shall read it and get inspired by the spirit of Swamiji and Alasinga.

Swami Chidekananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata



Be In The Driver's Seat

J P Vaswani

Gita Publishing House, Sadhu Vaswani Mission, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune 411 001. Email: gph@sadhuvaswani.org. 2013. 136 pp. For private circulation only. HB. ISBN 9789380743790.

Nowadays both parents and teachers complain that young people do not listen to them. They say that even if the mother attempts to discipline the young child, there is the fear that the child will talk back, or in extreme cases, call the police! Young people, on the other hand, complain that there are no mentors to guide them through life; on the contrary, they find that seniors simply want to boss over them.

In this book, the well-known author J P Vaswani provides wonderful suggestions to the youth on how to live a happier and purposeful life. As the title suggests, he provides thirty-one different ideas and each idea constitutes a separate chapter. Each chapter is about two to four pages long. The suggestions for leading a fuller life range include both avoiding destructive behaviours, such as stress and anger which sap our energy and also practising affirmative, positive habits such as proper breathing and speaking the truth. Vaswani's method of presentation is simple yet effective. Rather than speaking down to the audience, for each idea, he first begins with a story to illustrate the utility of the suggestion, and then applies logic, humour, and tact to explore how the opposite behaviour may harm us. Though the ideas will be useful for young people, the method of communication in this book should be studied closely by both parents and teachers to learn how to effectively communicate to and inspire values into our young people.

Though the ideas have been nicely presented in each chapter, the order of presentation of ideas, from one idea to the next, is a bit random and scattered. Individually, each chapter is nice, but the relationship between ideas in a systematic manner, could have been better presented. Nonetheless, there are many jewels of wisdom in this concise book for people of all ages.

Swami Chidekananda

We are awfully surprised if someone tells us that printing press equipment initially meant to 'keep the ink from smearing in the humid summer months' (76) would eventually turn into an air conditioner now used in millions of homes and that the invention of printing press led to the invention of reading glasses. This book comes with such abundant surprises and presents to us some of the most striking and seemingly impossible innovations through a network of events for which the author uses the phrase 'adjacent possible' from the complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman (64).

Many a time it is simply out of our scope to understand the interrelations between apparently unrelated events, the undercurrent that feeds various surface activities, and yet, this book has done exactly that. It seldom contains math formulas, equations proving a hypothesis, algorithms, or flow charts. Instead, it has captivating stories telling historical facts of how a scientific endeavour or business adventure that happened in one continent in one century can affect directly or indirectly a vast array of events in another continent in another century, defining the very way of life of people across the globe. What surprises us is that we hardly think about these fascinating facts behind the actualising of our everyday appliances and equipment from the imaginations of various seemingly ordinary people in history.

The author uses the term, 'The Hummingbird Effect' (5), that is, unexpected consequences of new innovations as they ripple through society. He reflects, for example, on how the invention of air conditioning modified the political map of America in the twentieth century through the vast migrations of people to the hotter southern states. Taking such sample events, the author portrays the unimaginable influences of an innovation, or a cluster of innovations, from one field that end up triggering changes that seem to belong to a different domain altogether. The author selects six fields of our everyday life and science, classified mainly as glass, cold, sound, clean, time, and light. One by one, he takes on the journey of each one of these fields and exemplifies through systematic correlation the evolution of some remarkably successful technologies. For instance, he elaborates how at the back of the innovation of refrigeration



**How We Got to Now:
Six Innovations That Made
the Modern World**

Steven Johnson

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ISBN 9781594632969.

is 'a young man's dream of untold riches' and how 'the story of artificial cold began with a more urgent and humanitarian need: a doctor trying to keep his patients alive' (62); and how gradually decreasing the size of initially huge refrigeration systems, ultimately, small refrigerators for home were born. Here the author adds: 'But the smaller footprint of artificial cold would, ironically, end up triggering changes in human society that were so massive you could see them from space' (68).

Here it is wonderfully pointed out how original inventors of many important technologies made silly mistakes, that notwithstanding, eventually things came out right. For example, the inventor of the 'phonograph' (92), the self-writing sound, had invented the first sound recording device in history. But the idea to include 'play-back' never occurred to him. So what is the use of a sound recorded but without the ability to hear it again? Of course, his idea must have been an impetus for later inventors of sound recorders. This and many such amusing tales, this book is replete with.

Many innovations, like ultrasound devices, had to wait for their time to come. The device that was originally intended for detecting U-boats during World War I was finally proven more useful sometime after World War II in determining the health of a baby early in a pregnancy and many other diagnostic purposes. In this context, the author importantly adds:

No technological advance is purely positive in its effects: for every ship saved from an iceberg, there are countless pregnancies terminated because of missing Y chromosome. The march of technology has its own internal logic, but the moral application of that technology is up to us. We can decide to use ultrasound to save lives or terminate them. (Even more challenging, we can use ultrasound to blur the very boundaries of life, detecting a heartbeat in a fetus that is only weeks old.) (123).

Tracking the history of incandescent lights, we have Edison, who was just one of those inventors struggling throughout the last century developing the filament lights in very much the same way as Edison did. But the credit went to Edison as he knew how to market his invention. The author here explains the remarkable organising abilities of

Edison and how his technique of 'cross-disciplinary research-and-development lab' was later adopted by Bell Labs and Xerox-PARC. He says: 'Edison didn't just invent technology; he invented an entire system for inventing, a system that would come to dominate twentieth-century industry' (211).

A video documentary based on this book was broadcast on PBS television, presented by the author himself. Though the context of this book is limited to the history of selected innovations only from Europe and America, we should first get to this book for knowing how we got to now.

Associate Editor
Prabuddha Bharata



Pages from the Past:

Part 1

Rameshwar Tantia

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission,
Dakshineswar, Kolkata 700 076.
Website: www.srismath.org. 2014.
104 pp. ₹ 5. PB.

Ordinary people and ordinary places often leave extraordinarily indelible marks on our minds. These daily-life accounts from our neighbourhood remain untold. Rameshwar Tantia has through this book, originally in Hindi, tried to set right this lacuna by recounting incidents and people, some from the ancient times and some from his life, who by their acts of kindness and grace, increase our faith in humanity.

This slim yet elegant volume begins with accounts of Cicero and Alexander, and continues with the story of a millionaire who wanted to save for the next six generations, a rich man who broke caste barriers through a meal, a farmer who protected his cows transcending religious boundaries, a widow who lived frugally to save for digging a well in her village, dacoits who were more conscious of their reputation than others, a simpleton but generous person who gave up his family share to avoid disputes, and a boy who is compelled to steal to feed his ailing mother; and ends with legendary accounts of Dronacharya and Tansen. Easily readable and highly inexpensive, this book is a thought-provoking pleasure.

Editor
Prabuddha Bharata

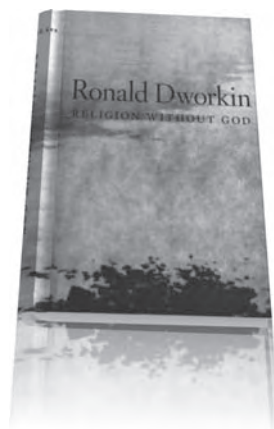
MANANA

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Religion Without God

Ronald M Dworkin

Harvard University Press, 79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. 2013. ix + 180 pp. \$ 17.95. HB. ISBN 9780674726826.



THE THEME OF THIS BOOK is that religion is deeper than God. Religion is a deep, distinct, and comprehensive worldview: it holds that inherent, objective value permeates everything, that the universe and its creatures are awe-inspiring, that human life has purpose and the universe order. A belief in a god is only one possible manifestation or consequence of that deeper worldview. Of course, gods have served many human purposes: they have promised an afterlife, explained storms, and taken sides against enemies. But a central part of their appeal has been their supposed achievement of filling the world with value and purpose. The conviction that a god underwrites value, however, as I will argue, presupposes a prior commitment to the independent reality of that value. That commitment is available to nonbelievers as well. So theists share a commitment with some atheists that is more fundamental than what divides them, and that shared faith might therefore furnish a basis for improved communication between them.

The familiar stark divide between people of religion and without religion is too crude. Many millions of people who count themselves as atheists have convictions and experiences similar to and just as profound as those that believers count as religious. They say that though they do not believe in a 'personal' god, they nevertheless believe in a 'force' in the universe 'greater than we are'.

They feel an inescapable responsibility to live their lives well, with due respect for the lives of others; they take pride in a life they think well lived and suffer sometimes inconsolable regret at a life they think, in retrospect, wasted. They find the Grand Canyon not just arresting but breathtakingly and eerily wonderful. They are not simply interested in the latest discoveries about vast space but enthralled by them. These are not, for them, just a matter of immediate sensuous and otherwise inexplicable response. They express a conviction that the force and wonder they sense are real, just as real as planets or pain, that moral truth and natural wonder do not simply evoke awe but call for it.

Judges often have to decide what 'religion' means for legal purposes. For example, the US Supreme Court had to decide whether, when Congress provided a 'conscientious objection' exemption from military service for men whose religion would not allow them to serve, an atheist whose moral convictions also prohibited service qualified for the objection. It decided that he did qualify. The Court, called upon to interpret the Constitution's guarantee of 'free exercise of religion' in another case, declared that many religions flourish in the United States that do not recognize a god, including something the Court called 'secular humanism'. Ordinary people, moreover, have come to use 'religion' in contexts having nothing to do with either gods or ineffable

forces. They say that Americans make a religion of their Constitution, and that for some people baseball is a religion. These latter uses of the term 'religion' are only metaphorical, to be sure, but they seem parasitic not on beliefs about God but rather on deep commitments more generally.

So the phrase 'religious atheism,' however surprising, is not an oxymoron; religion is not restricted to theism just as a matter of what words mean. But the phrase might still be thought confusing. Would it not be better, for the sake of clarity, to reserve 'religion' for theism and then to say that Einstein, Shelley, and the others are 'sensitive' or 'spiritual' atheists? But on a second look, expanding the territory of religion improves clarity by making plain the importance of what is shared across that territory.

Religion, we should say, does not necessarily mean a belief in God. But then, granted that someone can be religious without believing in a god, what does being religious mean? What is the difference between a religious attitude to the world and a nonreligious attitude? That is hard to answer, because 'religion' is an interpretive concept. That is, people who use the concept do not agree about precisely what it means: when they use it, they are taking a stand about what it should mean. When he called himself religious, Einstein may well have had in mind something different from what William James did when he classified certain experiences as religious or what the Supreme Court justices did when they said that atheistic beliefs could qualify as religious. So we should consider our question in that spirit. What account of religion would it be most revealing to adopt?

We must turn to this challenge almost immediately. But we should pause to notice the background against which we consider the issue. Religious war is, like cancer, a curse of our species. People kill each other, around the world, because they hate each other's gods. In less violent

places like America they fight mainly in politics, at every level from national elections to local school board meetings. The fiercest battles are then not between different sects of godly religion but between zealous believers and those atheists they regard as immoral heathens who cannot be trusted and whose growing numbers threaten the moral health and integrity of the political community.

Books ridiculing God were once, decades ago, rare. Religion meant a Bible, and no one thought it worth the trouble to point out the endless errors of the biblical account of creation. No more. Scholars devote careers to refuting what once seemed, among those who enthusiastically buy their books, too silly to refute.

If we can separate God from religion—if we can come to understand what the religious point of view really is and why it does not require or assume a supernatural person—then we may be able to lower, at least, the temperature of these battles by separating questions of science from questions of value. The new religious wars are now really culture wars. They are not just about scientific history—about what best accounts for the development of the human species, for instance—but more fundamentally about the meaning of human life and what living well means. As we shall see, logic requires a separation between the scientific and value parts of orthodox godly religion. When we separate these properly, we discover that they are fully independent: the value part does not depend—cannot depend—on any god's existence or history. If we accept this, then we formidably shrink both the size and the importance of the wars. They would no longer be culture wars. This ambition is utopian: violent and nonviolent religious wars reflect hatreds deeper than philosophy can address. But a little philosophy might help.



REPORTS

New Math Centre

Ramakrishna Swargashrama, Lalgurh, which was till now a retreat centre under the supervision of the Headquarters, has been made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Math. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Math, Lalgurh, Dist. Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal 721516.'

News of Branch Centres

Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Tripura, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House and Cultural Centre, Kolkata** on 28 September 2015.

The guest house, Swami Vijnanananda Bhavan, at **Ramakrishna Math, Ghatshila** was inaugurated on 6 October, the sacred birthday of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj.

The newly set-up bookstall of **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Medinipur** was inaugurated on 10 November.

Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada conducted conventions for school students, youths, and teachers on 13, 14, and 15 November. In all, about 2,200 people participated in the events.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed building for educational activities at **Ramakrishna Mission, Delhi** on 20 November.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kadapa conducted a youth convention on 20 and 21 November in which 1,300 students from 24 colleges participated.

The renovated Old Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at **Ramakrishna Math, Chennai** was rededicated on 25 November. In all, 115 monastics and about 3,000 devotees attended the programme.



Flood Relief in Chennai

Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a bookshop of **Ramakrishna Math, Baghbazar** at Beniatola Lane, near College Street, Kolkata, on 25 November, in the presence of several monastics, dignitaries, and devotees. The building also has a shrine and a small lecture hall.

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore conducted a state-level residential camp for youths from 26 to 28 November in which 1,198 youths took part.

Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the extension to the kitchen building at **Ramakrishna Math, Kanchipuram** on 27 November.

At **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarupukur** Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the building for the food processing unit of their Pallimangal wing on 28 November.


Relief

Flood Relief · Tamil Nadu: Torrential rains in many parts of Tamil Nadu in November caused heavy floods in several areas of the state, affecting thousands of families. Three of our centres in Tamil Nadu conducted the following relief operations: (a) **Chennai Math** distributed 15,000 kg rice, 500 kg dal, 200 kg biscuits, 30 kg milk powder, 1,500 blankets, 500 towels, 1,000 saris, 1,000 lungis, 1,500 mats, and 100 sets of utensils (each set containing 2 cooking pots, 3 plates, and 2 spoons) among 1,693 families in Cuddalore district from 14 to 18 November. The centre also served cooked food to nearly 5,000 affected people at Foreshore Estate in Chennai on 17 November. Medical relief was provided to 1,860 flood-affected patients. (b) **Chennai Students' Home** served 15,485 food

packets (each packet containing rice, pickles, and water sachets) and 5,000 loaves of bread to 11,680 affected families in Thiruvallur, Kanchipuram, and Chennai districts from 15 to 25 November. (c) **Chengalpattu** centre served cooked food to 1,700 victims on 17 and 18 November and distributed 790 kg rice, 90 kg dal, biscuits, and 3 kg milk powder among 84 families of 3 interior villages in Chengalpattu district from 21 to 23 November. **West Bengal:** Three of our centres in West Bengal conducted the following relief operations among the flood-affected people in the state: (a) **Antpur** centre distributed 1,185 saris, 372 dhotis, and 1,476 assorted garments among 1,491 families of 17 villages in Hooghly district from 16 September to 31 October. (b) **Ichapur** centre distributed 300 saris, 300 dhotis, 100 children's garments, 100 jackets, and 20 mats among 686 families of 14 villages in Hooghly and Paschim Medinipur districts from 15 October to 8 November. (c) **Sikra Kulingram** centre distributed 300 saris, 200 lungis, 100 dhotis, and 200 children's garments among 600 families of 5 villages in North 24 Parganas district from 26 September to 8 October.

Distress Relief · The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: **India:** (a) **Belgharia:** 300 saris, 253 dhotis, 200 lungis, 1,600 assorted garments, and 40,000 halogen tablets from 17 to 26 October. (b) **Chandipur:** 300 saris and 200 dhotis from 13 to 16 October. (c) **Chapra:** 100 lungis from 20 to 23 November. (d) **Coimbatore Math:** Clothes to 130 children from 6 to 10 November. (e) **Ghatshila:** 400 saris, 200 dhotis, 100 lungis, 86 children's garments, and 79 assorted garments from 25 September to 21 November. (f) **Malda:** 650 saris and 200 children's garments in October and November. (g) **Patna:** 400 saris and 200 dhotis from 13 to 26 November. (h) **Ramharipur:** 600 saris, 200 dhotis, 200 children's garments, and 100 pants from 4 October to 2 November. (i) **Vrindaban:** 1,000 kg rice, 1,000 kg atta (flour), 200 kg dal, 200 kg mustard oil, 200 kg salt, 100 kg sugar, 200 bathing soap bars, 200 washing soap bars, 40 kg washing powder, 20 kg tea leaves, and 40 kg milk powder among 200 old women on 20 November. **Bangladesh:** **Mymensingh:** 100 saris and 332 dhotis on 20 November.

Winter Relief · 1,400 blankets and 260

jackets were distributed to poor people through the following centres: **Barasat:** 300 blankets on 7 and 8 November; **Belgharia:** 80 blankets on 17 October; **Chapra:** 100 jackets from 20 to 23 November; **Cossipore:** 300 blankets on 19 September and 13 November; **Ghatshila:** 370 blankets and 60 jackets from 25 September to 21 November; **Khetri:** 50 blankets on 22 November; **Ramharipur:** 300 blankets and 100 jackets from 4 October to 2 November. 

Correction · January 2016, p. 276: The review article *Sri Sarada Devi and Her Divine Play* was written by Prof. M Sivaramkrishna.

Flood Relief in Tamil Nadu



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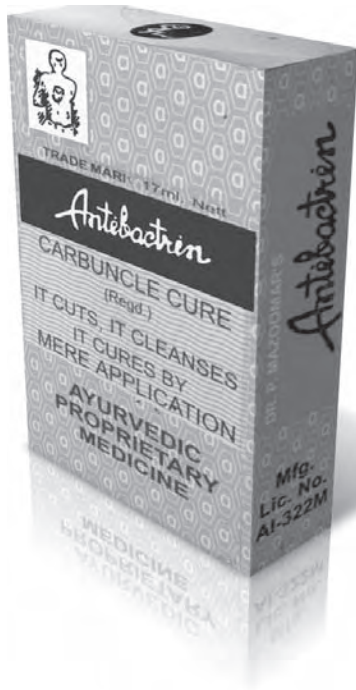


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INDIA

SYNOPSIS OF THE GOVERNING BODY'S REPORT FOR 2014-15

The **106th Annual General Meeting** of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, the 27th December 2015 at 3.30 p.m.

UNESCO has established an *official relationship* with the Ramakrishna Mission in the areas of inter-cultural dialogue, social cohesion and a culture of peace and non-violence for a period of six years. Foundation stone for the proposed *Centre for Human Excellence and Social Sciences*, '**Viveka Tirtha**', at Rajarhat, New Town, Kolkata, was laid by the Chief Minister of West Bengal. International Diabetes Federation (IDF), Brussels, Belgium, awarded recognition to the *Certified Diabetes Educator-India (CDEI)* programme at **Vrindaban** centre for excellence in providing diabetes education to healthcare professionals.

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of the
Report

Shillong centre was conferred *Youth and Education Award 2014*, by 'Christ School International' and 'Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures' in recognition of the centre's excellent service in Northeast India. Cleanliness, a hallmark of our tradition, got an impromptu recognition under the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* of the Government of India and the centres enthusiastically undertook cleanliness drives in their localities.

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Report

The four-year-long service programme was run in different parts of the country from 2010 to 2014. A sum of Rs. 93 crore was spent on these central-government-aided service projects. A brief report is attached herewith.

A new branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission was started at **Shimla**, Himachal Pradesh. 'Sevavrata' a new sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama **Sargachhi**, was started at **Bairgachhi** village, Dist Murshidabad, West Bengal. Outside India, a new sub-centre of **Jessore** (Bangladesh) Mission centre was started at **Narail**, Bangladesh.

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In **educational field**, the following **new developments** deserve special mention: (i) Smart Class facilities (computer-aided teaching tools) were introduced in our schools at **Aalo** (Arunachal Pradesh), **Chennai Mission Ashrama** (Tamil Nadu) and **Deoghar** (Jharkhand) centres; (ii) **Karinganj** (Assam) centre started a *computer centre*; (iii) **Delhi** centre trained 1700 teachers of 700 CBSE schools in Delhi NCR, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Chennai and Kolkata in imparting values education to students; (iv) **Guwahati** centre launched a quarterly journal in Assamese language, entitled *Vivek Bhaskar*.

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Report

In **medical field**, the following **new developments** deserve special mention: (i) two modular operation theatres with advanced facilities and a new acupuncture clinic, etc in **Lucknow** hospital; (ii) a cardiac care centre which includes a high dependency unit, cath. lab and cardio-thoracic vascular surgery unit etc at **Seva Pratishthan, Kolkata**; (iii) **Vrindaban** centre opened a new emergency block; (iv) **Delhi** centre upgraded the Fundus Fluorescein Angiography (FFA) equipment at its TB clinic.

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Report

In **rural development field**, the following **new projects** deserve special mention: (i) **Ranchi** (Morabadi) centre constructed 228 *percolation tanks* under the IWMP (Integrated Watershed Management Programme), constructed gravity irrigation systems, which do not need any power, at Piprabera, Simrabera, Rupru and Jharna Pani villages of Angara Block; (ii) A water treatment plant with a capacity of 2000 litres per hour was installed by **Rajahmundry** centre at Rampachodavaram in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh for the local tribal people; (iii) **Narainpur** centre started various projects to develop 105 hectares of land in 6 villages and 20 Anganwadis helping 600 children.

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Report

Under the **Math**, following **new projects** deserve special mention: (i) **Ma Sarada Vocational Training Centre** was started at **Baghbazar** (West Bengal) centre; (ii) A newly constructed homeopathy dispensary was inaugurated at **Palai** (Kerala) Ashrama; (iii) **Ponnampet** (Karnataka) centre started a Vocational Training Centre for providing training in tailoring, handloom, motor vehicle driving, naturopathy assistant; (iv) The renovated **Dilaram Bungalow** (sanctified by Swamiji's stay in 1892) at **Vadodara** (Gujarat) centre was inaugurated.

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Outside India, the following **new developments** deserve special mention: (i) **Colombo** centre, unveiled a bronze statue of Swamiji at Sri Ponnambala Vaneshwarar temple in Colombo which was visited by Swamiji in 1897; (ii) **Sacramento** centre celebrated its golden jubilee; (iii) A newly built Universal Meditation Centre at Swami Vivekananda College of **Fiji** centre was inaugurated.

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During the year, the Mission undertook **Welfare work** by way of providing scholarships to poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick and destitute people, etc (about 8.22 lakh beneficiaries); expenditure incurred Rs. 14.74 crore.

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Medical service was rendered to more than 81.62 lakh people through 10 hospitals, 74 dispensaries, 44 mobile medical units and 963 medical camps; expenditure incurred Rs. 167.08 crore.

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Nearly 3.18 lakh students were studying in our educational institutions from kindergarten to university level, non-formal education centres, night schools, coaching classes, etc. A sum of Rs. 267 crore was spent on **educational work**.

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A number of **rural and tribal development projects** were undertaken with a total expenditure of Rs. 11.74 crore benefiting about 16.96 lakh rural people.

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The Mission and Math undertook several **relief and rehabilitation** programmes in different parts of the country involving an expenditure of Rs. 6.34 crore, benefiting 2.98 lakh people of 1.18 lakh families.

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of the
Report

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our members and friends for their kind cooperation and help.

(Swami Suhitananda)
General Secretary

27 December, 2015

Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

A final report of the Central-Government-grant-aided service projects from 08.10.2010 to 31.10.2014

- Gadadhar Abhyudaya Prakalpa** (Integrated Child Development): Implemented through 174 units in 23 states. About 18,300 children were benefited. A sum of Rs. 25.95 crore was spent.
- Vivekananda Swasthya Parisheva Prakalpa** (Health Services Project for Mothers & Children): About 13,700 mothers and children were benefited through 126 units in 22 states. A sum of Rs. 17.98 crore was spent.
- Sarada Palli Vikas Prakalpa** (Women Self-Empowerment): Implemented at 11 villages in 8 states. In all, 3194 women were benefited. A sum of Rs. 2.04 crore was spent.
- Swami Akhandananda Seva Prakalpa** (Poverty Alleviation): Project was implemented through 12 units in 7 states. Altogether 3109 people were benefited. A sum of Rs. 2.01 crore was spent.
- Special Service Activities** (For Professionals and Parents): Altogether 50,863 parents and professionals were benefited in 13 states. A sum of Rs. 99.32 lakh was spent.
- Print Media Project**: In all, 49.55 lakh copies of books were printed, which included short life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda in 24 Indian & 3 Foreign (German, Japanese & Zulu) languages, 75,000 copies on National Leaders of India, The Cultural Heritage of India – 1100 sets (8 volumes), The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda – 1200 sets (9 volumes), etc. A sum of Rs. 6.16 crore was spent.
- Special Programmes for the Youth**: Youth Counseling Cells in 12 cities – counseled 48,714 youths; Organized 3 National Level, 6 Regional Level and 18 State Level Youth Conventions / Camps – total participants: 88,600; Held competitions in essay-writing, quiz, etc: 1 National Level, 4 Regional Level and 13 State Level (total 4,57,304 participants); Conducted Sustained Graded Value Education Programmes through (a) 397 units (Non-formal type) in 14 states with 17,904 students of 246 institutions; and (b) 2,692 units (Classroom-based) in 18 states with 1,23,165 students of 774 schools. A sum of Rs. 28.74 crore was spent.
- Electronic Media Project**: Two documentaries – 'Women of India' & 'A Poet, a Man, a Monk', an e-book on *Personality Development*, a multimedia presentation on *Education*, all based on the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. A documentary *Rising India* on the activities for the disadvantaged; 26-episode *Vivekananda Answers*, an interactive programme for the youth, aired on Doordarshan. A sum of Rs. 2.87 crores was spent.
- Cultural Programmes Project**: Organized 2 International, 1 National, 3 Regional-Level, 10 State-Level Seminars & 5 Regional-Level Conferences on 'Relevance of Swami Vivekananda in meeting the challenges in the 21st century', 'Religious Harmony' and 'Unity in Diversity', etc. 19 Classical Music programmes. A sum of Rs. 5.34 crores was spent.

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of the
Report

In all, a sum of Rs. 93 crore was spent on the above projects.



We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

— Swami Vivekananda



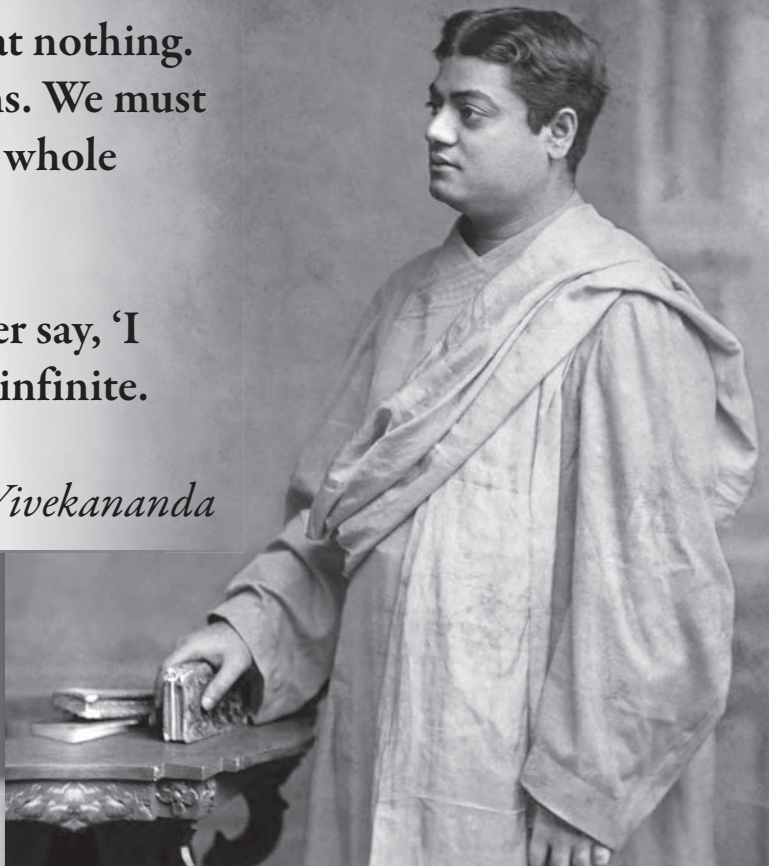
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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